

The Muses' Library

BEDDOES' POEMS

THE POEMS
OF
THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY
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TO
EDWIN HAMILTON, M.A.
THIS EDITION OF
BEDDOES' POETICAL WORKS
IS INSCRIBED BY
THE EDITOR

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INTRODUCTION

I

JOHN FORSTER in his *Walter Savage Landor: A Biography*, tells us that when the 'Five Scenes,' in which Landor dealt with the 'sad and sacred drama' of the Cenci, were first sent to him in 1850 to be included in *Last Fruit off an Old Tree*, they were inscribed to the memory of Beddoes, who had died in the previous year.

'In laying these scattered lines of mine', Landor wrote, 'on the recently closed grave of Beddoes, *fungar nam munere*; but it is, if not a merit, at least a somewhat of self-satisfaction, to be among the earliest, if among the humblest, in my oblation. Nearly two centuries have elapsed since a work of the same wealth of genius as *Death's Jest-Book* hath been given to the world'.

The references to Beddoes made by his contemporaries are few indeed, and even this reference exists only in Forster, for Landor, to whom a live young girl was always more than many dead poets, substituted for the proposed inscription one to Eliza Lynn, afterwards Mrs Lynn Linton, and no doubt did wisely.

The few facts which represent all that is known.

of the life and death of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, were published in 1851 in a memoir prefixed to a collected edition of his poems edited by his friend and literary executor, Thomas Forbes Kelsall, who, in deference to the wishes of certain friends and relatives of the poet, suppressed the fact that Beddoes committed suicide. This was first revealed by Mr Edmund Gosse, in 1890 in the two-volume edition of *The Poetical Works*, in the preface to which he tells the story of how the Beddoes MSS. and papers were placed in his hands.

Beddoes published but little in his lifetime in book-form. That little consisted of *The Improvisatore*, a duodecimo of 128 pages, printed and published with his name at Oxford, in 1821, and *The Brides' Tragedy*, published by the Rivingtons in 1822. The former book has almost disappeared from view, owing to the relentless methods of suppression adopted by the author, who destroyed every copy on which he could lay his hands. Of the latter very few copies are known to exist. His letters, of which some were published by Kelsall in 1851, and some by Mr Gosse in 1894, show that nearly all his life Beddoes kept tinkering at *Death's Jest-Book* and other dramatic poems; and when he died, it was found that he had bequeathed all his papers to Kelsall with a view to their publication or non-publication as he deemed fit.

We learn from Mr Gosse that 'the family of the poet, whose knowledge of him had grown very slight, were at first exceedingly undesirous that his poetic MSS. should be preserved, although

they were willing to pay for the publication of any scientific writings. Their repugnance was finally overcome, and in 1850 Kelsall published, in a thin volume, *Death's Jest-Book* '.

This volume was published by William Pickering, and bears no author's name upon the title page. It is from Kelsall's own copy, which bears his autograph upon the fly-leaf—'Thos F. Kelsall', that this addition to Routledge's 'Muses' Library' is reprinted. In the following year, 1851, Kelsall collected the dramatic fragments and miscellaneous poems into a volume which he issued under the title of *Poems by the late Thomas Lovell Beddoes, author of Death's Jest-Book ; or The Fool's Tragedy*. This also was published by Pickering, and 130 pages are devoted to an unsigned 'Memoir' written by Kelsall, who imbedded in his notes on the poet's career some extracts from his letters, and added a note from one of Beddoes' school-fellows, giving some glimpses of him as a lad at Charterhouse.

In this 'Memoir' Kelsall gives the account of the poet's death, which was generally accepted until contradicted by Mr Gosse. The account is founded on Beddoes' own statement in a letter written from Bâle to his sister, in which he says that his horse fell under him and broke his left leg 'all to pieces', and that in consequence it had to be cut off below the knee joint. To this accident, and to some poison which had entered his system through a puncture received whilst engaged in a dissection at Frankfort earlier in the year, the poet's death is attributed in the 'Memoir'

referred to, but in the document by which Kelsall transferred the Beddoes' MSS., he states that when he and his wife went to Basle in 1868, they visited Beddoes' physician, 'and found that he had no doubt as to the injuries which brought Beddoes to the hospital having been self-inflicted, and that accident there was none'. Kelsall also stated in this document, which was signed in 1869 some three years before he died, that this physician believed that Beddoes' death was 'the direct result of a self-administered poison . . . called Kurara', or curari.

It will be evident from the foregoing that there are no authorities for the text of Beddoes' poetical works, or for the facts in connection with his career, save those supplied by Kelsall, to whom Beddoes was introduced by Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall) in 1823, and who remained his lifelong friend and almost sole correspondent. A short time before Kelsall died, in 1872, he transferred all the Beddoes MSS. and papers to Robert Browning, by whom they were kept locked up and unexamined until July 1883, when he invited Mr Edmund Gosse to help him in undertaking a complete examination, the result being the two-volume edition published in 1890. The Beddoes' papers, Mr Gosse states in his preface, remain in the possession of Mr Robert Barrett Browning.

II

Thomas Lovell Beddoes was born in Rodney Place, Clifton, on the 20th July 1803. His father,

Thomas Beddoes, was a celebrated physician, an M.D. of Oxford, and a lecturer on chemistry at that University, who won European recognition by his daring speculations in connection with his profession, and whose original and vigorous thought took shape in the foundation at Clifton of the Pneumatic Institution. The mother of the poet was Anna, a sister of Maria Edgeworth, the novelist. When his son was only six years old, Dr Beddoes died, leaving the boy to the guardianship of an old college friend, Davies Giddy, better known as Sir Davies Gilbert, President of the Royal Society. Young Beddoes was sent by his guardian to Bath Grammar School, which he left in June 1817 for the Charterhouse. Here he began to write verses, and won the Latin theme prize allotted to the fifth form, although one of his schoolfellows, Mr Bevan, in the note appended to Kelsall's 'Memoir', wrote of him:

'I should say that at school he was not a very good scholar, at least as far as Latin and Greek give a claim to that title; but unusually forward and well read in the best English literature, particularly of the lighter sort, and above all, dramatic poetry'.

But however deficient in knowledge of the Greek dramatists Beddoes may have been, he very early in life acquired that intimacy with the works of the Elizabethan dramatists which Mr Swinburne declares should be the natural heritage of all Englishmen, for Mr Bevan tells us:

'He knew Shakespeare well when I first saw him, and during his stay at the Charterhouse made himself master of all the best English dramatists,

from Shakespeare's time, or before it, to the plays of the day. He liked acting, and was a good judge of it, and used to give apt though burlesque imitations of the popular actors, particularly of Kean and Macready. Though his voice was harsh and his enunciation offensively conceited, he read with so much propriety of expression and manner, that I was always glad to listen : even when I was pressed into the service as his accomplice, his enemy or his love, with a due accompaniment of curses, caresses, or kicks, as the course of his declamation required. One play in particular, Marlowe's tragedy of *Dr Faustus*, excited my admiration, and was fixed in my memory in this way ; and a liking for the old English drama, which I still retain, was created and strengthened by such recitations'.

While at school, Beddoes wrote a novel, entitled *Cynthio and Bugboo*, the result of a study of Fielding. The loss of this early work need not be deplored, for we are assured by Mr Bevan that it possessed 'all the coarseness, little of the wit, and none of the truth of his original'.

When he was sixteen, and still at Charterhouse, some verses contributed by Beddoes were printed in *The Morning Post* of July 7, 1819. The lines (32 in number) are included in this volume. They are signed 'E. D. Bodes', and bear date July 5, 1819. The lines were occasioned by the appearance that year of a comet of extraordinary brilliancy, and they bear the title of *The Comet*. In May 1820 he left for Oxford, and was entered a commoner at Pembroke,

which had been his father's college, and also his guardian's.

At Oxford Beddoes seems to have devoted his time more to the writing of poems than to an endeavour to win academic distinction. His career as an author commenced in 1821, when as a freshman of eighteen, he published his first volume, *The Improvisatore*, and dedicated it to his mother. It was this little volume of 128 pages which he was so zealous in later years in destroying. He followed this up in 1822 with *The Brides' Tragedy*, published by Rivington. These two pamphlets form all that the poet published. The rest of his work was published after his death, as already stated, by Kelsall. *The Brides' Tragedy*, in the general dearth of poetry of an order higher than the productions of L. E. L., attracted considerable attention, and critical and highly laudatory articles on the subject appeared in *The Edinburgh Review* and *The London Magazine*, both contributed by a poet whose reputation was then at its zenith—Bryan Waller Procter, who, although personally unknown to Beddoes, wrote him most friendly letters. George Darley also, in a series of *Letters to the Dramatists of the Day*, which were in course of publication in *The London Magazine*, went out of his way to pronounce a critical judgment in favour of the author of *The Brides' Tragedy*.

The year 1823 was one of the most important in the life of Beddoes, for it was in the summer of that year that Procter gave him an introduction to Kelsall, who lived at Southampton, to

which place Beddoes betook himself in order to read quietly for his bachelor's degree. There he settled down to work, but his reading was much interfered with by the strong desire—never stronger than at this period of his life—for poetic composition. His imagination appears to have been more prolific during his sojourn in Southampton than it proved to be later in his career, and he produced rapidly, striking dramatic fragments of remarkable power and originality, only to express his dissatisfaction with his verses, and substitute for them fresh passages of equal fire and force. It was this hypercriticism of his own productions that marred so much of Beddoes' work, and left it in a fragmentary and unfinished state. It is to this period that *Love's Arrow Poisoned* and *The Last Man* belong. Kelsall appears to have been the poet's sole acquaintance in Southampton, and also his sole auditor. The young lawyer was a keen critic, and also an able appraiser, and he appears to have at once noticed the great deficiency in Beddoes' dramas, the inability of their author to construct a plot. Of praise, no doubt, he was prodigal, for the total output of the poet during this memorable year was remarkable when contrasted with those which follow. The influence of the Elizabethan dramatists is clearly discernible in the romantic dramas written at this period. indeed, Beddoes' notes on *Love's Arrow Poisoned* contain an injunction to himself to write 'Marstonic lines' for one of the characters, and he seems to have taken as his models Webster and Cyril Tourneur.

Of his contemporaries Beddoes held Shelley most highly in esteem, and it was to his initiative and practical support that the publication of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*, so soon after the poet's death, was due. In the winter of 1823, Beddoes started a subscription with Procter and Kelsall for their publication, and wrote to John Hunt on the subject, promising to take 250 copies. Hunt said that Mrs Shelley should have a profit. Beddoes did not agree, and complained: 'for the twinkling of this very distant chance we three poor honest admirers of Shelley are certainly to pay'. The result was, that on their guarantee the first edition was published in 1824, although the whole impression, save a few volumes sold, was almost immediately withdrawn by Mrs Shelley, by arrangement with Sir Timothy. Others of his contemporaries, whom Beddoes greatly admired, were Wordsworth and Keats, the latter of whom he is said to have resembled; indeed the likeness is said to have been striking, until in later years he grew a beard and 'looked like Shakespeare'.

Beddoes' letters in 1824 are dated from London, (where he lived chiefly in Devereux Court), Oxford, and Bristol. In the summer he hurriedly went to Florence, where his mother had gone for the benefit of her health, but she died before he arrived. He remained some weeks in Italy, and mentions in a letter to Kelsall that he saw Walter Savage Landor, who was resident in Florence. He then returned with his sisters to Clifton. It was in this year that he began to study German, in which he afterwards became so proficient that

he wrote, when ^{he} had taken up residence in Germany, that he was now considered 'a popular German poet'.

His critical judgments at this period proved how energetically he pursued his study of the Elizabethan dramatists. He wrote from Bristol to Procter in a letter dated March 3:

'About Shakespeare you don't say enough. He was an incarnation of nature; and you might just as well attempt to remodel the seasons, and the laws of life and death, as to alter one "jot or tittle" of his eternal thoughts. "A Star", you call him. If he was a star, all the other stage scribblers can hardly be considered a constellation of brass buttons'.

Later we find him writing to Kelsall:

'Say what you will, I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper into worm-holes—no reviver even, however good. These reanimations are vampire cold. Such ghosts as Marlowe, Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets, I daresay, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts—the worm is in their pages—and we want to see something that our greatgrand-sires did not know. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think that we had better beget than revive, attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own, and only raise a ghost to gaze on, not to live with. Just now the drama is a haunted ruin'.

Spurred on by a desire to 'break through all

difficulties and re-establish what ought to be the most distinguished department of our poetic literature', Beddoes hacked away at *The Second Brother* and *Torrismond*, making but little progress, and announces in a letter to Kelsall, dated March 25, 1825, that he wrote, five months previously, in the coach which conveyed him from Southampton to London, a song 'which is sung with much applause by one of my *dramatis personæ* in the unfinished drama No. 3 in my possession'. This song, which its author does not hesitate to call 'a famous one', is the

Ho! Adam the carrion crow
The old crow of Cairo,

which duly found its place in *Death's Jest-Book*.

On the 25th of May 1825, Beddoes took an ordinary bachelor's degree at Oxford, and on the 8th of June we find him announcing in a letter to Kelsall the title of his most important contribution to English literature. He writes:

'Oxford is the most indolent place on earth. I have fairly done nothing in the world but read a play or two of Schiller, Æschylus, and Euripides—you, I suppose, read German now as fast as English. . . . I do not intend to finish that *Second Brother* you saw, but am thinking of a very Gothic-styled tragedy, for which I have a jewel of a name—DEATH'S JEST-BOOK—of course no one will ever read it—Mr Milman (our poetry professor) has made me quite unfashionable here by denouncing me, as one of a "villainous school". I wish him another son'.

The next letter from Beddoes, dated but a few days later, is from Hamburg, and it is chiefly by his letters that it is possible to trace his wayward career from this date onward. He suddenly determined to follow his father's profession, and deeming Göttingen superior to Edinburgh as a place of medical study, he left at once for the university there; accordingly, we find him at Hamburg. 'sitting on a horse-hair sofa, looking over the Elbe, with his meerscham by his side, full of Gräve and abundantly prosaic. To-morrow, according to the prophecies of the diligence, he will set out for Hanover—and by the end of this week mein Herr Thomas will probably be a Dr of the university of Göttingen'.

At Göttingen Beddoes commenced a life which gradually transformed him from an Englishman into a German. His letters are full of German expressions and criticisms on the work of German writers, including Goethe, of whom he, at first, formed a low opinion, but one which he revised very considerably as time went on. He mentions the great Blumenbach as being his best friend, and he appears to have attended 'the clever old humorous' Blumenbach's lectures, and occupied himself with his studies in medicine with great assiduity; only devoting from ten to eleven at night to writing a little *Death's Jest-Book*, 'which is', he declares, 'a horrible waste of time'. He sends a minute account of how he spends his days to Kelsall, and adds, 'I never was better employed, never so happy, never so well self-satisfied'. He also tells the friend who took a very

deep interest in his literary work, that *Death's Jest-Book* goes on like the tortoise, slow and sure ; I think it will be entertaining, very unamiable, and utterly unpopular. Very likely it may be finished in the spring or autumn'.

Another reference to his literary labours is given in a letter in verse to Procter, undated, but bearing the postmark, March 13, 1826.

I have been

Giving some negro minutes of the night,
Freed from the slavery of my ruling spright,
Anatomy the grim, to a new story
In whose satiric pathos we will glory.
In it Despair has married wildest Mirth,
And to their wedding-banquet all the earth
Is bade to bring its enmities and loves,
Triumphs and horrors: you shall see the doves
Billing with quiet joy, and all the while
Their nest's the skull of some old King of Nile;
But he who fills the cup and makes the jest
Pipes to the dancers, is the fool o' the feast.
Who's he? I've dug him up and decked him trim
And made a mock, a fool, a slave of him
Who was the planet's tyrant: dotard Death.

A month later *Death's Jest-Book* has made but little progress, but 'lies like a snowball, and I give it a kick every now and then out of mere scorn and ill-humour. The fourth act, and I may say the fifth, are more than half done, so that at last it will be a perfect mouse; but such doggerel'! His belief in his 'doggerel', however, is proved, by his referring, in the same letter, to 'its strangenesses, it contains nothing else'.

coming 'like an electric shock among the small critics'.

On the 5th of October he commences a letter in German to Kelsall, and continuing in English expresses a desire that his friend should come to see him in order that he 'might look over my unhappy devil of a tragedy, which is done and done for: its limbs being as scattered and unconnected as those of the old gentleman whom Medea minced and boiled young. I have tried twenty times at least to copy it fair, but have given it up with disgust'.

Life at Göttingen was a monotony broken only by occasional short trips in the neighbourhood. How short these trips were may be imagined from the fact that Beddoes writes that for twelve months he had not been six miles from the circuit of the city walls. He amused himself by rowing on the little lake and studying the romantic legends of the place. He concludes a letter written on October 9, 1826, with the announcement, '*Death's Jest-Book* is finished in the rough, and I will endeavour to write it out and send it to you before Easter'. He also tells Procter, to whom the letter is addressed, that he had just bought 'three salamanders. They are pretty, fat, yellow and black reptiles, that live here in the ruins of an old castle in the neighbourhood; on the Hartz I hear they are larger. It is not a bad retributory for the metempsychosis soul of a bullying knight'.

Early in 1828 Beddoes paid a hasty visit to England in order to take his M.A. degree at

Oxford, and he returned as soon as possible to Germany, declaring that nothing could equal his impatience and weariness of this dull, idle, pampered isle. He stayed a couple of days in London at his old lodgings at 6 Devereux Court.

In February 1829 he sent Kelsall from Göttingen, 'the celebrated *Fool's Tragedy: or Death's Jest-Book*', begging that he and Procter will read it, and decide as to its fitness for publication, and referring to the notes appended to it, adds, 'LUZ is an excellent joke'. In this year and the two following, Beddoes resided at Würzburg in Bavaria. He had now been long enough on the Continent to find his mother-tongue fading away from his memory, and that his German years had a little impaired his English style, a fact he regrets, as Cowley was the first poetical writer whom he learned to understand. He heard with equanimity the decision of Procter and Bourne that *Death's Jest-Book* must be 'revised and improved', and proposes to devote the whole of the summer to the task.

Beddoes had been attracted to Würzburg by 'a very clever professor of medicine . . . and a princely hospital'. Here his only English books were Shakespeare and Wordsworth, but he read little save medicine, and in 1832 he took his degree of M.D. Beddoes now appears to have taken practical interest in politics as a radical. He promises to subscribe five pounds 'towards the subscription for the support of candidates who were professed supporters of the Reform Bill', and in a letter to Revell Phillips, one of his oldest English

friends, he writes that he has been taking much interest in some 'distinguished Polish officers and other exiles from that unconquered, tho' at present enslaved country'. The natural consequences of countenancing revolutionaries is seen in his next letter, though not very clearly, for of the letter but a fragment remains. It was written from Strasburg.

'The absurdity of the King of Bavaria has cost me a good deal, as I was obliged to oppose every possible measure to the arbitrary illegality of his conduct, more for the sake of future objects of his petty Royal malice than my own, of course, in vain'.

The upshot was that Beddoes was 'banished by that ingenious Jack-a-napes of Bavaria' along with others, amongst them Schoenlien, author of *Natural History of the Diseases of Europeans*, which Beddoes proposed to translate into English. He settled at Zurich, which became for him a favourite place of residence, and he seems to have practised as a physician there for some years. In 1835, he writes that Schoenlien had proposed him to the medical faculty of the University as Professor of comparative anatomy, but that political reasons, as well as the fact that he had not published any scientific work, led to his rejection.

March 1837 finds him writing once more to Kelsall, with whom he had not corresponded for some time, that he is preparing for the press 'a volume of prosaic poetry and poetical prose'. This he intended to call *The Ivory Gate*, and writes:

'I am not asinine enough to imagine that it will be any great shakes, but what with a careless temper and the pleasant translunary moods I walk and row myself into upon the lakes and over the Alps of Switzerland it will, I hope, turn out not quite the smallest ale brewed out with the water of the fountain of the horse's foot'. He again refers to the revision of *Death's Jest-Book*, and after objecting to the elimination of the crocodile's song, adds, 'after all I only print it because it is written, and can't be helped, and really only for such readers as . . . W. Savage Landor, yourself, etc. (if there be yet a plural number left)'. He exhibits some of his old interest in English literature and contemporary writers, and asks: 'What are the votaries of the Muse doing yonder? What is Cosmo de' Medici? Paracelsus? Strafford? and Sergeant Talfourd's Ion or John?'

Beddoes seems to have had a serene if not a happy time at Zurich. He writes of this period a description of 'how I employ, or abuse my time . . . being independent and having all the *otium*, if not the *dignitas* . . . sometimes I dissect a beetle, sometimes an oyster, and very often trudge about the hills and the lakes, with a tin box on my back, and "peep and botanize" in defiance of W. W. Sometimes I peep half a day through a microscope. Sometimes I read Italian (in which I am only a smatterer), or what not, and not seldom drink I, and smoke like an Etna. . . . And so I weave my Penelopean web and rip it up again: and so I roll my impudent Sis-

phean stone ; and so I eat my beefsteak, drink my coffee, and wear my coats out at the elbow, and pay my bills (when I can) as busy an humble bee as any who doth nothing'.

Beddoes must not, however, be taken as being so idle as he states, for he was busily engaged at this time in translating Grainger's book *On the Spinal Cord* into German.

His peaceful existence at Zurich was broken in upon by a political rising on the 8th of September 1839, when a mob of six thousand peasants, 'half unarmed, and the other half armed with scythes, dungforks and poles, led on by a fanatic, and aided by some traitors in the cabinet, and many in the town, effected the downfall of the government, by far the best and most liberal that the canton ever lived under'.

This upheaval effected Beddoes intensely. His best friend, Hegetschweiler, a most important member of the government, was shot in the tumult ; another, Kellar, was compelled to fly to a neighbouring republic, and Beddoes wrote : 'In consequence of this state of things, in which neither property nor person is secure, I shall find it necessary to give up my present residence entirely. Indeed the dispersion of my friends and acquaintance, all of whom belonged to the liberal party, renders it nearly impossible for me to remain longer here'.

From the date of Beddoes' departure from Zurich, the facts in connection with his career, meagre as they are at all times, become more and more difficult to ascertain. Between the dates

of his letters to his friends in England, great gaps occur, and when he does write, the tone of his letters is purely impersonal. Even Kelsall appears to have lost sight of him, and contents himself with stating that in certain years he was in certain places. It is to Mr Gosse that all lovers of Beddoes are indebted for such few facts as are known of the poet's life from 1839 until his death.

Mr Gosse says that Beddoes lingered in Zurich until March 1840, when his life, being threatened by the revolutionaries, he was obliged to leave. He was helped in his escape from the town by a former leader of the liberal party, a man named Jasper, whom he had befriended. In 1841, Beddoes was in Berlin, and in the autumn of the year following, he paid a short visit to England, 'the native land of the Unicorn'. In 1843 he went to Baden en Suisse, not far from Zurich.

There is no letter from Beddoes to his English friends between the date of the letter to Revell Phillips (Sept. 12, 1839) quoted above, in which he says he must leave Zurich, and one to Kelsall, dated Nov. 13, 1844, five years later, written from Giessen, to which 'wretched little town' he says he was attracted by Liebig's chemical school. He gives but a meagre account of his wanderings, referring his correspondent to Murray for descriptions of Basel, Strasburg, Mannheim, Mainz and Frankfurt, but includes in his letter matters more attractive in the transcription of two of his most beautiful poems, *In Lover's Ear a Wild Voice cried*, and *The Swallow leaves her Nest*. He adds :

'Do not imagine that I do much in the pottery way now. Sometimes to amuse myself I write you a German lyric or epigram, right scurrilous, many of which have appeared in the Swiss and German papers, and some day or other I shall have them collected and printed for fun'. This, of course, he never did.

In August 1846 Beddoes came to England for six weeks, but his stay was prolonged, and his movements impeded by neuralgia, and he did not leave until June 1847. Kelsall saw him at the close of his visit, and found him much altered—'The seriousness of his aspect and manner had increased; it had deepened almost into sadness: as if there existed but few objects of sufficient interest to draw his mind outward'. Mr Gosse tells us that his friends found Beddoes 'altered beyond all recognition. He had become extremely rough and cynical in speech, and eccentric in manners'. Mr Gosse also refers to his suffering from neuralgia, and quotes a relative of Beddoes to the effect that 'for six out of the ten months which he spent in England, he was shut up in a bedroom reading and smoking, and admitting no visitor'. Beddoes stayed at the residence of one of his relatives, Cheney Long Villa, near Ludlow. In April 1847 he went on a visit to Kelsall at Fareham; a visit which had a good effect on his spirits. He left Fareham in May for London, where he once more met the Procters. Mr Gosse gives an interesting account of Beddoes as gathered from the lips of Mrs Procter, an account which proves that Beddoes' misanthropy

and eccentricity, which had been growing for years, had now become particularly noticeable.

In June 1847 Beddoes returned to Frankfurt, where he formed a friendship with a young baker named Degen. This Degen appears to have become to Beddoes all that the celebrated 'Posh' became to the gifted translator of Omar Khayyam. For six months, we are told, he would see no one but Degen. It was in Frankfurt that Beddoes met with the accident whilst dissecting, to which reference has already been made, and which resulted in blood-poisoning. 'This was overcome, but it greatly weakened and depressed him'. In May 1848 he left Frankfurt, taking Degen, whom he had persuaded to become an actor, with him. He actually rented the theatre in Zurich for one night in order that Degen should appear upon the boards as Hotspur, Beddoes having taught him English, and coached him in the part himself. Nothing more is known with any certainty as to the movements of Beddoes and his strange companion, save the facts told by Mr Gosse. Briefly, those facts are that at Bâle Beddoes was separated from Degen, and in a state of deep dejection, took a room at the Cicogne Hôtel, in which early next morning he made a deep gash in his right leg with a razor. The details need not here be entered into, suffice it to say that as a consequence of the patient's tearing off the bandages the wound became worse, and the leg had to be amputated below the knee joint. After this he became somewhat better in health and spirits, and talked of going to Italy when fully recovered.

In December he was able to leave his room, and on the 26th of January 1849 was allowed to go into the town. He appears to have seized this opportunity to obtain the deadly poison. Kurara, and in the evening he was found lying on his back in bed insensible, with a letter written in pencil, and addressed to Revell Phillips, lying folded on his bosom. In this letter he says: 'I ought to have been, among a variety of other things, a good poet. Life was too great a bore on one peg, and that a bad one'. He died at ten o'clock the same night, and was buried under a cypress in the cemetery of the hospital.

III

In his essay on Botticelli, Walter Pater wrote in connection with the relative merits of a Botticelli and a Michelangelo: 'There is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere, and these, too, have their place in general culture, and must be interpreted to it by those who have felt their charm strongly, and are often the objects of a special diligence and a consideration wholly affectionate, just because there is not about them the stress of a great name and authority.'

It is to this class of rare artists that Beddoes belongs. He conveys to us 'a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere', not even among the Elizabethan dramatists who were his models, and to whom we turn when we seek

an intellectual pleasure akin to that given us by a study of *Death's Jest-Book*, which reads like the work of a modern John Webster, whose scritch owle, and whose whistler shrill seem to call to us as menacingly in these pages as in those of *The Duchess of Malfy*.

And it must be remembered that we cannot judge Beddoes by any finished work of his, for he never finished anything. His chief contribution to English literature exists in three forms so wholly different from each other that Mr Gosse says it would be possible to produce a variorum edition. We must, therefore, regard the samples of Beddoes, preserved for us by the loving care of Kelsall, as a promise merely of what their author might have achieved had he attained to the age of a Walter Savage Landor. They are to be regarded as merely starting into form,

Like the red outline of beginning Adam,

not as finished creations.

But if Beddoes' work is fragmentary, the fragments inspire respect. No ordinary builder could handle such materials as these. It is of such fragments that literary pyramids are built; they are awe-inspiring in their vastness, like the huge monoliths of Stonehenge, and as suggestive of the vast structure in which they were to find each its fitting place. The imagery Beddoes employs strikes the reader by its originality, and often by its majesty, as, for instance, when he compares Time to a great body of water:

One has said that time
Is a great river running to eternity.
Methinks 'tis all one water, and the fragments,
That crumble off our ever-dwindling life,
Dropping into 't, first make the twelve-houred circle,
And that spreads outwards to the great round Ever.

Beddoes presents an instance of a physician who is also a poet, and it is curious that in this dual capacity of scientist and poet, that he should have realized the dictum of Wordsworth that 'poetry is the finer breath of all science', by anticipating Charles Darwin's theory as surely as the great naturalist's grandfather anticipated the general conclusions of *The Origin of Species* in his *Loves of the Plants*.

Death's Jest-Book was first published in 1850, a year after the death of its author. *The Origin of Species* was first published in 1859, and *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

Here are the remarkable passages referred to. They will be found in *Death's Jest-Book*, Act V, Sc. I:

I have a bit of FIAT in my soul,
And can myself create my little world.
Had I been born a four-legged child, methinks
I might have found the steps from dog to man;
And crept into his nature.

Further, in a passage with which Herbert Spencer might have prefaced his *Principles of Biology*, or Professor Haeckel have used as a motto for his great work on *The Evolution of Man*, Beddoes wrote:

It was ever
My study to find out a way to godhead.
And on reflection soon I found that first
I was but half created ; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make. Therefore I fashioned
A will above my will, that plays upon it,
As the first soul doth use in men and cattle.
There's lifeless matter , add the power of shaping,
And you've the crystal : add again the organs,
Wherewith to subdue the sustenance to the form
And manner of one's self, and you've the plant :
Add power of motion, senses, and so forth,
And you've all kinds of beasts ; suppose a pig :
To pig add reason, foresight, and such stuff,
Then you have man. What shall we add to man
To bring him higher ? I begin to think
That's a discovery I soon shall make.

Dr Charlton Bastian, or Mr Butler Burke, those experimentalists in spontaneous generation, could not have put the case more clearly ! And who but a believer in the germ-theory could have written the following :

If man could see
The perils and diseases that he elbows,
Each day he walks a mile ; which catch at him,
Which fall behind and graze him as he passes ;
Then would he know that Life's a single pilgrim,
Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers.
It is thus infinite invisible
Which we must learn to know, and yet to scorn,
And, from the scorn of that, regard the world
As from the edge of a far star.

. But Beddoes, though a scientist, was also a

true poet. His poems are full of beauty, and his songs are as 'tender as sun-smitten dew'. If there is in them a haunting echo of the Elizabethan dramatists, there also clings to much of his work a reminiscence of Shelley at his prime; witness when he says :

I begin to hear
Strange but sweet sounds, and the loud rocky dashing
Of waves, where time into Eternity
Falls over ruined worlds.

His songs are exquisite. The beauty of *The Swallow leaves her Nest*, and *If Thou wilt ease Thine Heart*, is only matched by the lyrics written in 'the spacious times of great Elizabeth', while the dirges might have been penned by Webster, and the grim humour have emanated from Cyril Tourneur. But Beddoes, and he alone, could have writted Isbrand's song, *Squats on a Toad Stool*, which, in its imaginative grotesqueness, is unrivalled throughout our literature.

To the student of comparative literature Beddoes is interesting as marking the transition from Shelley to Browning, for there is not a little in his work suggestive of both poets.

Although he lived to be forty-five, as a poet he died young, for his best work belongs to the period of his youth. He was too careless of fame to strive to acquire a lasting position amongst English dramatists, although he ardently desired to achieve it, and those who read his work and his life sadly acknowledge, in the words of Barry Cornwall, that :

He was a man to seize
The eagle Greatness in its flight, and wear
Its feather in his casque. He's dead : he died
Young ; as the great will die ; as Summer dies,
By drought and its own fevers burned to death.

RAMSAY COLLES.

EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS edition of Beddoes' Poetical Works contains all his published poems save ten which appear in the two volumes edited by Mr Gosse, and of these, two, entitled *The Old Ghost* and *Lord Alcohol* will be found in *The Poets and Poetry of the Nineteenth Century* in the volume devoted to the period from John Keats to Lord Lytton, pp. 545 and 546.

The Editor has diligently compared the text of *The Improvisatore* and the Miscellaneous Poems with the copy of the rare original which is in the British Museum Library, with the result that he has been enabled to correct errors which crept into Mr Gosse's edition. The text of *The Brides' Tragedy* has also been compared with the original edition published in the author's lifetime, as well as with the volumes edited by Kelsall and Mr Gosse, and errors in the reprints of this drama and of *Death's Jest-Book* have been thus avoided.

DEATH'S JEST BOOK
OR
THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY

PERSONS REPRESENTED

MELVERIC ; Duke of MUNSTERBERG.

ADALMAR ;
ATHULF ; } His sons.

WOLFRAM ; a knight.
ISBRAND ; the court-fool. } Brothers.

THORWALD ; Governor in the Duke's absence.

MARIO ; a Roman.

SIEGFRIED ; a courtier.

ZIBA ; an Egyptian slave.

HOMUNCULUS MANDRAKE ; zany to a mountebank.

SIBYLLA.

AMALA ; Thorwald's daughter.

JOAN.

*Knights, Ladies, Arabs, Priests, Sailors, Guards, and
other attendants.*

The Dance of Death.

SCENE ; in the first act at Ancona, and afterwards in
Egypt ; in the latter acts at the town of Grüssau,
residence of the Duke of Munsterberg, in Silesia.

TIME ; the end of the thirteenth century.

DEATH'S JEST-BOOK

OR THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY

ACT I

SCENE I. *Port of Ancona*

Enter MANDRAKE and JOAN

Mandr. Am I a man of gingerbread that you should mould me to your liking? To have my way, in spite of your tongue and reason's teeth, tastes better than Hungary wine; and my heart beats in a honey-pot now I reject you and all sober sense: so tell my master, the doctor, he must seek another zany for his booth, a new wise merry Andrew. My jests are cracked, my coxcomb fallen, my bauble confiscated, my cap decapitated. Toll the bell; for oh! for oh! Jack Pudding is no more!

Joan. Wilt thou away from *me* then, sweet Mandrake? Wilt thou not marry me?

Mandr. Child, my studies must first be ended. Thou knowest I hunger after wisdom, as the red sea after ghosts; therefore will I travel awhile.

Joan. Whither, dainty Homunculus?

Mandr. Whither should a student in the black arts, a journeyman magician, a Rosicrucian? Where is our country? You heard the herald this morning thrice invite all christian folk to follow the brave knight, Sir Wolfram, to the shores of Egypt, and there help to

free from bondage his noble fellow in arms, Duke Melveric, whom, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, wild pagans captured. There, Joan, in that Sphynx land found Raimund Lully those splinters of the philosopher's stone with which he made English Edward's gold. There dwell hoary magicians, who have given up their trade and live sociably as crocodiles on the banks of the Nile. There can one chat with mummies in a pyramid, and breakfast on basihsk's eggs. Thither then, Homunculus Mandrake, son of the great Paracelsus ; languish no more in the ignorance of these climes, but aboard with alembic and crucible, and weigh anchor for Egypt.

Enter ISBRAND

Isbr. Good morrow, brother Vanity ! How ? soul of a pickle-herring, body of a spagirical toss-pot, doublet of motley, and mantle of pilgrim, how art thou transmuted ! Wilt thou desert our brotherhood, fool sublimate ? Shall the motley chapter no longer boast thee ? Wilt thou forswear the order of the bell, and break thy vows to Momus ? Have mercy on Wisdom and relent.

Mandr. Respect the grave and sober, I pray thee. To-morrow I know thee not. In truth, I mark that our noble faculty is in its last leaf. The dry rot of prudence hath eaten the ship of fools to dust ; she is no more sea worthy. The world will see its ears in a glass no longer ; So we are laid aside and shall soon be forgotten ; for why should the feast of asses come but once a year, when all the days are foaled of one mother ? O world, world ! The gods and fairies left thee, for thou wert too wise ; and now, thou Socratic star, thy demon, the great Pan, Folly, is parting from thee. The oracles still talked in their sleep, shall our grandchildren say, till Master Merriman's kingdom

was broken up · now is every man his own fool, and
the world's sign is taken down [He sings.

Folly hath now turned out of door
Mankind and Fate, who were before
Jove's harlequin and clown :
For goosegrass-harvest now is o'er ;
The world's no stage, no tavern more,
Its sign, the Fool's ta'en down.

Isbr. Farewell, thou great-eared mind I mark, by
thy talk, that thou commencest philosopher, and then
thou art only a fellow-servant out of livery. But lo !
here come the uninitiated—

*Enter THORWALD, AMALA, WOLFRAM, knights
and ladies*

Thorw. The turning tide ; the sea's wide leafless wind,
Wherein no birds inhabit and few traffic,
Making his cave within your sunny sails ,
The eager waves, whose golden, silent kisses
Seal an alliance with your bubbling oars ;
And our still-working wishes, that impress
Their meaning on the conscience of the world,
And prompt the unready Future—all invite you
Unto your voyage. Prosperous be the issue,
As is the promise, and the purpose good !
Are all the rest aboard ?

W'olfr. All. 'Tis a band
Of knights, whose bosoms pant with one desire,
And live but in the hope to free their prince :
All hearts beat merrily, all arms are ready.

Mandr. All, sir Knight ; even the very pigs and
capons, and poor dear great Mandrake must be shipped
too.

Wolfr. Who is this saucy fellow, that prates between ?
Isbr. One of the many you have made. Yesterday he was a fellow of my colour and served a quacksalver, but now he lusts after the mummy country, whither you are bound. 'Tis a servant of the rosy cross, a correspondent of the stars ; the dead are his boon companions, and the secrets of the moon his knowledge. But had I been cook to a chameleon, I could not sweeten the air to his praise enough. Suffice it, of his wisdom Solomon knew less than a bee of fossil flowers, or the ambrosian demigods of table beer. We fools send him as our ambassador to Africa ; take him with you, or be yourself our consul.

Wolfr. Aboard then in all speed ; and sink us not with thy understanding.

Mandr. I thank thee, Knight. Twice shalt thou live for this, if I bottle eternity. [*Exit, with JOAN.*]

Thorw. These letters yet, full of most weighty secrets :
Wherein, of what I dare but whisper to thee,
Since the dissemblers listen to our speech ;
Of his two sons, whose love and dread ambition,
Crossing like deadly swords, teach us affright ;
And of the uncertain people, who incline
Daily more to the present influence,
Forgetting all that their sense apprehends not ;
I have at large discoursed unto the duke :
And may you find his spirit strong to bear
The bending load of such untoward tidings,
As must press hard upon him.

Amala. And forget not
Our duke, with gentle greetings, to remind
Of those who have no sword to raise for him,
But whose unarmed love is not less true,
Than theirs who seek him helmed. Farewell, sir knight ;
They say you serve a lady in those lands,
So we dare offer you no token else
But our good wishes.

Wolfr. Thanks, and farewell to all ;
And so I take my leave.

Amala. We to our homes ;
You to the homeless waves ; unequal parting.

Wolfr. The earth may open, and the sea o'erwhelm ;
Many the ways, the little home is one ;
Thither the courser leads, thither the helm,
And at one gate we meet when all is done.

[*Exeunt all but WOLFRAM and ISBRAND.*]

Isbr. Stay : you have not my blessing yet. With
what jest shall I curse you in earnest ? Know you this
garb, and him who wears it, and wherefore it is worn ?
A father slain and plundered ; a sister's love first worn
in the bosom, then trampled in the dust : our fraternal
bond, shall it so end that thou savest him whom we
should help to damn ? O do it, and I shall learn to
laugh the dead out of their coffins !

Wolfr. Hence with your dark demands : let's shape
our lives

After the merciful lesson of the sun,
That gilds our purpose. See the dallying waves
Caress invitingly into their bosom
My fleet ship's keel, that at her anchor bounds
As doth the greyhound at her leader's hand,
Following her eye beams after the light roe.

Isbr. Away then, away ! Thus perish our good
Revenge ! Unfurl your sails : let all the honest finny
folk of ocean, and those fair witty spinsters, the mer-
maids, follow your luckless boats with mockery : sea
serpents and sea-dogs and venomous krakens have
mercy on your mercy, and drag you down to the salt
water element of pity ! What, O ! what spirit of our
ancestral enemies would dare to whisper through our
father's bones the tale of thy apostacy ? Deliver him
from the Saracens' irons, or the coil of the desert snake,
who robbed our sire's grey hairs of a kingdom, his
heart of its best loved daughter, and trod him down a

despairing beggar to the crowned corpses of our progenitors? Save *him*, who slew our hopes; who cozened us of our share of this sepulchral planet, whereon our statues should have stood sceptred? Revenge, Revenge, lend me your torch, that I may by its bloody fire see the furrows of this man's countenance, which once were iron, like the bars of Hell gate, and devilish thoughts peeped through them; but now are as a cage of very pitiful apes.

Wolfr. Should we repent this change? I know not why.

We came disguised into the court, stiff limbed
With desperate intent, and doubly souled
With murder's devil and our own still ghosts
But must I not relent, finding the heart,
For which my dagger hungered, so inclined
In brotherly affection unto me?

O bless the womanish weakness of my soul
Which came to slay, and leads me now to save!

Isbr. Hate! Hate! Revenge and blood! These are the first words my boys shall learn. What accursed poison has that Duke, that snake, with his tongue, his fang, dropped into thine ear? Thou art no brother of mine more: his soul was of that tune which shall awaken the dead: for thine! if I could make a trumpet of the devil's antlers, and blow thee through it, my lady's poodle would be scarce moved to a horn-pipe. O fie on't! Thou my brother? Say when hast thou undergone transfusion, and whose hostile blood now turns thy life's wheels? Who has poured Lethe into thy veins, and washed thy father out of heart and brains? Ha! be pale, and smile, and be prodigal of thy body's movements, for thou hast no soul more. *That* thy sire placed in thee; and, with the determination to avenge him, thou hast driven it out of doors. But 'tis well so: why lament? Now I have all the hatred and revenge of the world to myself to abhor and murder him with.

Wolfr. Thon speak'st unjustly, what thou rashly
think'st ;

But time must soften and convince : now leave me,
If thou hast nothing but reproach for pastime.

Isbr. Be augry then, and we will curse each other.
But if thou goest now to deliver this man, come not
again for fear of me and our father's spirit : for when
he visits me in the night, screaming revenge, my heart
forgets that my head wears a fool's cap, and dreams of
daggers · come not again then !

Wolfr O think not, brother, that our father's
spirit

Breathes earthly passion more : he is with me
And guides me to the danger of his foe,
Bringing from heaven, his home, pity and pardon.
But, should his blood need bloody expiation,
Then let *me* perish. Blind these eyes, my sire,
Palsy my vigorous arm, snow age upon me,
Strike me with lightning down into the deep,
Open me any grave that earth can spare,
Leave me the truth of love, and death is lovely.

[*Exit.*

Isbr. O hon-heartedness right asinine !
Such hly-livered meek humanity
Saves not thy duke, good brother ; it but shines
Siekly upon his doom, as moonbeams breaking
Upon a murderer's grave-digging spade.
Or fate's a fool, or I will be his fate.
What ho ! Sir Knight ! One word — Now for a
face
As innocent and lamblike as the wool
That brings a plague.

Re-enter WOLFRAM

Wolfr. What will you more with me ?

Isbr. Go, if you must and will ; but take with you
At least this letter of the governor's,

Which, in your haste, you dropped. I must be honest,
For so my hate was ever. Go.

Wolfr. And prosper ! [*Exit.*]

Isbr. Now then he plunges right into the waters !
O Lie, O Lie, O lovely lady Lie,
They told me that thou art the devil's daughter.
Then thou art greater than thy father, Lie ;
For while he mopes in Hell, thou queen'st it bravely,
Ruling the earth under the name of Truth,
While she is at the bottom of the well,
Where Joseph left her.

Song from the ship

To sea, to sea ! The calm is o'er ;
The wanton water leaps in sport,
And rattles down the pebbly shore ;
The dolphin wheels, the sea-cows snort,
And unseen Mermaids' pearly song
Comes bubbling up, the weeds among.
Fling broad the sail, dip deep the oar :
To sea, to sea ! the calm is o'er.

To sea, to sea ! our wide-winged bark
Shall billowy cleave its sunny way,
And with its shadow, fleet and dark,
Break the caved Tritons' azure day,
Like mighty eagle soaring light
O'er antelopes on Alpine height.
The anchor heaves, the ship swings free,
The sails swell full. To sea, to sea !

Isbr. The idiot merriment of thoughtless men !
How the fish laugh at them, that swim and toy
About the ruined ship, wrecked deep below,
Whose pilot's skeleton, all full of sea weeds,

Leans on his anchor, grinning like their Hope.
But I will turn my bosom now to thee,
Brutus, thou saint of the avenger's order ;
Refresh me with thy spirit, or pour in
Thy whole great ghost. Isbrand, thou tragie fool,
Cheer up. Art thou alone ? Why so should be
Creators and destroyers. I'll go brood,
And strain my burning and distracted soul
Against the naked spirit of the world,
Till some portent's begotten. [Exit.

SCENE II

*The African Coast : a woody solitude near the sea.
In the background ruins overshadowed by the characteristic vegetation of the oriental regions*

*The DUKE and SIBYLLA ; the latter sleeping in
a tent*

Duke. Soft sleep enwrap thee : with his balm bedew
Thy young fair limbs, Sibylla · thou didst need
The downy folding of his arms about thee.
And wake not yet, for still the starless night
Of our misfortunes hold its ghostly noon.
No serpent shall creep o'er the sand to sting thee,
No springing tiger, no uneouth sea-monster,
(For such are now the partners of thy chamber,)
Disturb thy rest : only the birds shall dare
To shake the sparkling blossoms that hang o'er thee,
And fan thee with their wings. As I watch for thee,
So may the power, that has so far preserved us,
Now in the uttermost, now that I feel
The cold drops on my forehead, and scarce know
Whether Fear shed them there, or the near breath
Of our pursuing foes has settled on it,
Stretch its shield o'er us.

Enter ZIBA

What bring'st, Ziba ? Hope ?
Else be as dumb as that thou bring'st, Despair.

Ziba. Fruits : as I sat among the boughs, and robbed
The sparrows and their brothers of their bread,
A horde of casqued Saracens rode by,
Each swearing that thy sword should rest ere night
Within his sheath, his weapon in thy breast.

Duke. Speak lower, Ziba, lest the lady wake.
Perhaps she sleeps not, but with half-shut eyes
Will hear her fate. The slaves shall need to wash
My sword of Moslem blood before they sheath it.
Which path took they ?

Ziba. Sleeping, or feigning sleep,
Well done of her : 'tis trying on a garb
Which she must wear, sooner or later, long :
'Tis but a warmer lighter death. The ruffians,
Of whom I spoke, turned towards the cedar forest,
And, as they went in, there rushed forth a lion
And tore their captain down. Long live the lion !
We'll drink his tawny health : he gave us wine.
For, while the Moors in their black fear were flying,
I crept up to the fallen wretch, and borrowed
His flask of rubious liquor. May the prophet
Forgive him, as I do, for carrying it !
This for to-day : to-morrow hath gods too,
Who'll ripen us fresh berries, and uncage
Another lion on another foe

Duke. Hail Arab, thanks. But saw'st thou from
the heights
No christian galley steering for this coast ?

Ziba. I looked abroad upon the wide old world,
And in the sky and sea, through the same clouds,
The same stars saw I glistening, and nought else.
And as my soul sighed unto the world's soul,
Far in the north a wind blackened the waters,
And, after that creating breath was still,

A dark speck sat on the sky's edge : as watching
Upon the heaven-girt border of my mind
The first faint thought of a great deed arise,
With force and fascination I drew on
The wished sight, and my hope seemed to stamp
Its shape upon it. Not yet is it clear
What, or from whom, the vessel.

Duke.

Liberty !

Thou breakest through our dungeon's wall of waves,
As morning bursts the towery spell of night.
Horse of the desert, thou, coy arrowy creature,
Startest like sunrise up, and, from thy mane
Shaking abroad the dews of slumber, boundest
With sparkling hoof along the scattered sands,
The livelong day in liberty and light.
But see, the lady stirs. Once more look out,
And thy next news be safety.

[Exit ZIBA.]

Hast thou gathered

*Rest and refreshment from thy desert couch,
My fair Sibylla ?*

Sibyl.

Deeply have I slept.

As one who hath gone down unto the springs
Of his existence and there bathed, I come
Regenerate up into the world again.
Kindest proteector, 'tis to thee I owe
This boon, a greater than my parents gave.
Me, who had never seen this earth, this heaven,
The sun, the stars, the flowers, but shut from nature
Within my dungeon birthplace lived in darkness,
Me hast thou freed from the oppressor's chain,
And godlike given me this heaven, this earth,
The flowers, the stars, the sun. Methinks it were
Ingratitude to thank thee for a gift
So measurelessly great.

Duke.

As yet, sweet lady,

*I have deserved but little thanks of thine.
We've not yet broken prison. This wall of waves*

Still towers between us and the world of men ;
That too I hope to climb. Our true Egyptian
Hath brought me news of an approaching ship.
When that hath borne thee to our German shore,
And thou amongst the living tastest life,
And gallants shall have shed around thy presence
A glory of the starry looks of love,
For thee to move in, thank me then.

Sibyl.

I wish not

To leave this shady quiet bower of life.
Why should we seek cruel mankind again ?
Nature is kinder far : and every thing
That lives around us, with its pious silence,
Gives me delight : the insects, and the birds
That come unto our table, seeking food,
The flowers, upon whose petals Night lays down
Her dewy necklace, are my dearest playmates.
O let us never leave them.

Duke.

That would be

To rob thy fate of thee. In other countries
Another godliker mankind doth dwell,
Whose works each day adorn and deify
The world their fathers left them. Thither shalt thou,
For among them must be the one thou'rt born for.
Durst thou be such a traitress to thy beauty
As to live here unloving and unloved ?

Sibyl. Love I not thee ? O, if I feel beside thee
Content and an unruffled calm, in which
My soul doth gather round thee, to reflect
Thy heavenly goodness : if I feel my heart
So full of comfort near thee, that no room
For any other wish, no doubt, remains,
Love I not thee ?

Duke.

Dear maiden, thou art young.

Thou must see many, and compare their merits
Ere thou canst choose. Esteem and quiet friendship
Oft bear Love's semblance for awhile.

Sibyl.

I know it ;

Thou shalt hear how. A year and more is past
Since a brave Saxon knight did share our prison ;
A noble generous man, in whose discourse
I found much pleasure : yet, when he was near me,
There ever was a pain which I could taste
Even in the thick and sweetest of my comfort .
Strange dread of meeting, greater dread of parting .
My heart was never still and many times,
When he had fetched me flowers, I trembled so
That oft they fell as I was taking them
Out of his hand. When I would speak to him
I heard not, and I knew not what I said.
I saw his image clearer in his absence
Than near him, for my eyes were strangely troubled ;
And never had I dared to talk thus to him.
Yet this I thought was Love. O self-deceived !
For now I can speak all I think to thee
With confidence and ease. What else can that be
Except true love ?

Duke

The like I bear to thee,
O more than all that thou hast promised me
For if another being stepped between us,
And were he my best friend, I must forget
All vows, and cut his heart away from mine.

Sibyl. Think not on that : it is impossible.

Duke. Yet, my Sibylla, oft first love must perish ;
Like the poor snowdrop, boyish love of Spring,
Born pale to die, and strew the path of triumph
Before the imperial glowing of the rose,
Whose passion conquers all.

*Enter ZIBA**Ziba.* O my dear lord, we're saved !*Duke.*

How ? Speak quickly.

Though every word hath now no meaning in't,
Since thou hast said ' she's saved '.

Ziba. The ship is in the bay, a christian knight
Steps from his boat upon the shore.

Duke. Blest hour !
And yet how palely, with what faded lips
Do we salute this unhop'd change of fortune !
Thou art so silent, lady ; and I utter
Shadows of words, like to an ancient ghost,
Arisen out of hoary centuries
Where none can speak his language. I had thought
That I should laugh, and shout, and leap on high :
But see this breath of joy hath damped my soul,
Melted the icy mail, with which despair
Had clad my heart and sealed the springs of weakness :
And O ! how feeble, faint, and sad I go
To welcome what I prayed for. Thou art silent ;
How art thou then, my love ?

Sibyl. Now Hope and Fear
Stand by me, masked in one another's shapes ;
I know not which is which, and, if I did,
I doubt which I should choose.

Enter a knight

Knight. Hither, Sir Knight—

Duke. What knight ?

Knight. What knight, but Wolfram ?

Duke. Wolfram, my knight !

Sibyl. My day, my Wolfram !

Duke. Knows't him ?

Sibyl. His foot is on my heart ; he comes, he comes.

Enter WOLFRAM, knights and attendants

Wolfr. Are these thy comrades ?

Then, Arab, thy life's work and mine is done.

My duke, my brother knight !

Duke.

O friend ! So call me !
Wolfram, thou comest to us like a god,
Giving life where thou touchest with thy hand.

Wolfr. Were it mine own, I'd break it here in twain,
And give you each a half.

Duke. I will not thank thee,
I will not welcome thee, embrace and bless thee;
Nor will I weep in silence. Gratitude,
Friendship, and Joy are beggar'd, and turned forth
Out of my heart for shallow hypocrites.
They understand me not; and my soul, dazzled,
Stares on the unknown feelings that now crowd it,
Knows none of them, remembers none, counts none,
More than a new-born child in its first hour.
One word, and then we'll speak of this no more:
At parting each of us did tear a leaf
Out of a magic book, and, robbing life
Of the red juice with which she feeds our limbs,
We wrote a mutual bond. Dost thou remember?

Wolfr. And if a promise reaches o'er the grave
My ghost shall not forget it. There I swore
That, if I died before thee, I would come
With the first weeds that shoot out of my grave,
And bring thee tidings of our real home.

Duke. That bond hast thou now cancelled thus; or
rather

Unto me lying in my sepulchre
Comest thou, and say'st, 'Arise and live again'.

Wolfr. And with thee dost thou bring some angel
back.

Look on me, lady.

Sibyl. (Aside) Pray heaven, it be not
The angel of the death of one of you,
To make the grave and the flowers' roots amends.
Now turn I to thee, knight. O dared I hope,
Thou hast forgotten me!

Wolfr. Then dead indeed
Were I, and my soul disinherited
Of immortality, which love of thee
Gave me the proof of first. Forgotten thee I

Sibyl. And he ?

Duke. Is he not mine ?

Wolfr. Go in, sweet, fearlessly.

I come to thee, before thou'st time to feel
That I am absent.

[*Exit SIBYLLA, followed by the rest.*]

Duke Wolfram, we have been friends

Wolfr. And will be ever.

I know no other way to live

Duke 'Tis pity

I would you had been one day more at sea.

Wolfr. Why so ?

Duke. You're troublesome to-day. Have you not
marked it ?

Wolfr. Alas ! that you should say so

Duke. That's all needless.

Those times are past, forgotten. Hear me, knight :

That lady's love is mine. Now you know that,

Do what you dare.

Wolfr. The lady ! my Sibylla !

I would I did not love thee for those words,

That I might answer well

Duke. Unless thou yield'st her,

For thou hast even subdued her to thy arms,

Against her will and reason, wickedly

Torturing her soul with spells and adjurations,

Unless thou giv'st her the free will again

To take her natural course of being on,

Which flowed towards me with gentle love :—O Wol-
fram,

Thou know'st not how she filled my soul so doing,

Even as the streams an ocean.—Give her me,

And we are friends again. But I forget.

Thou lovest her too, a stern, resolved rival ;

And passionate, I know. Nay then, speak out :

'Twere better that we argued warmly here,

Till the blood has its way.

Wolfr.

Unworthy friend !

My lord—

Duke. Forget that I am so, and many things
Which we were to each other, and speak out.
I would we had much wine ; 'twould bring us sooner
To the right point.

Wolfr. Can it be so ? O Melveric !

I thought thou wert the very one of all
Who shouldst have heard my secret with delight.
I thought thou wert my friend.

Duke.

Such things as these,
Friendship, esteem, faith, hope, and sympathy,
We need no more : away with them for ever !
Wilt follow them out of the world ? Thou see'st
All human things die and decay around us.
'Tis the last day for us ; and we stand bare
To let our cause be tried. See'st thou not why ?
We love one creature : which of us shall tear her
Out of his soul ? I have in all the world
Little to comfort me, few that do name me
With titles of affection, and but one
Who came into my soul at its night-time,
As it hung glistening with starry thoughts
Alone over its still eternity,
And gave it godhead. Thou art younger far,
More fit to be beloved ; when thou appearest
All hearts incline to thee, all prouder spirits
Are troubled unto tears and yearn to love thee.
O, if thou knew'st thy heart-compelling power,
Thou wouldst not envy me the only creature
That holds me dear. If I were such as thou,
I would not be forgetful of our friendship,
But yield to the abandoned his one joy.

Wolfr. Thou prob'st me to the quick : before to-day,
Methought thou could'st from me nothing demand
And I refuse it.

Duke.

Wolfram, I do beseech thee ;

Like a dumb creature that sees coming danger,
And breaks its heart trying in vain to speak ?
I know the moment : 'tis a dreadful one,
Which in the life of every one comes once ;
When, for the frightened hesitating soul,
High heaven and luring sin with promises
Bid and contend : oft the faltering spirit,
O'ercome by the fair fascinating fiend,
Gives her eternal heritage of life
For one caress, for one triumphant crime.
Pitiful villain ! that dost long to sin,
And dar'st not. Shall I dream my soul is bathing
In his reviving blood, yet lose my right,
My only health, my sole delight on earth,
For fear of shadows on a chapel wall
In some pale painted Hell ? No : by thy beauty,
I will possess thee, maiden. Doubt and care
Be trampled in the dust with the worm conscience !
Farewell then, Wolfram : now Amen is said
Unto thy time of being in this world :
Thou shalt die. Ha ! the very word doth double
My strength of life : the resolution leaps
Into my heart divinely, as doth Mars
Upon the trembling footboard of his car,
Hurrying into battle wild and panting,
Even as my death-dispensing thought does now.
Ho ! Ziba !

Enter ZIBA

Hush ! How still, how full, how lightly
I move since this resolve, about the place,
Like to a murder-charged thundercloud
Lurking about the starry streets of night,
Breathless and masked,
O'er a still city sleeping by the sea.
Ziba, come hither ; thou'rt the night I'll hang
My muffled wrath in. Come, I'll give thee work

Shall make thy life still darker, for one light on't
Must be put out. O let me joy no more,
Till Fate hath kissed my wooing soul's desire
Off her death-honied lips, and so set seal
To my decree, in which he's sepulchred.
Come, Ziba, thou must be my counsellor. [Exeunt.

SCENE III

A tent on the sea-shore : sunset

WOLFRAM and SIBYLLA

Wolfr. This is the oft-wished hour, when we together

May walk upon the sea-shore let us seek
Some greensward overshadowed by the rocks.
Wilt thou come forth? Even now the sun is setting
In the triumphant splendour of the waves.
Hear you not how they leap?

Sibyl. Nay; we will watch
The sun go down upon a better day
Look not on him this evening

Wolfr. Then let's wander
Under the mountain's shade in the deep valley,
And mock the woody echoes with our songs.

Sibyl. That wood is dark, and all the mountain caves
Dreadful, and black, and full of howling winds:
Thither we will not wander.

Wolfr. Shall we seek
The green and golden meadows, and there pluck
Flowers for thy couch, and shake the dew out of
them?

Sibyl. The snake that loves the twilight is come out,
Beautiful, still, and deadly; and the blossoms
Have shed their fairest petals in the storm
Last night; the meadow's full of fear and danger.

Wolfr. Ah ! you will to the rocky fount, and there
We'll see the fireflies dancing in the breeze,
And the stars trembling in the trembling water,
And listen to the daring nightingale
Defying the old night with harmony.

Sibyl. Nor that : but we will rather here remain,
And earnestly converse. What said the Duke ?
Surely no good.

Wolfr. A few unmeaning words,
I have almost forgotten.

Sibyl. Tell me truly,
Else I may fear much worse.

Wolfr. Well : it may be
That he was somewhat angry. 'Tis no matter ;
He must soon cool and be content.

Enter ZIBA

Ziba. Hail knight !
I bring to thee the draught of welcome Taste it.
The Grecian sun ripened it in the grape,
Which Grecian maidens plucked and pressed ; then
came
The desert Arab to the palace gate,
And took it for his tribute. It is charmed
And they who drink of such have magic dreams.

Wolfr. Thanks for thy care I'll taste it presently :
Right honey for such lips as I

Enter a knight

Knight. Up, brave Wolfram !
Arouse thee, and come forth to help and save.

Wolfr. Here is my sword. Who needs it ?

Sibyl. Is't the Duke ?
O my dark Fear !

Knight. 'Tis he. Hunting in the forest,
A band of robbers rushed on us.

Wolfr. How many ?

Knight. Some twelve to five of us , and in the fight
Which now is at the hottest, my sword failed me.

Up, good knight, in all speed : I'll lead the way.

Wolfr. Sibylla, what deserves he at our hands ?

Sibyl. Assist him ; he preserved me.

Wolfr. For what end ?

Sibyl. Death's sickle points thy questions No
delay

But hence

Enter a second knight

Wolfr. Behold another from the field—

Thy news ?

2nd Knight. My fellow soldiers all

Bleed and grow faint · fresh robbers pour upon us,
And the Duke stands at bay unhelmed against them.

Wolfr. Brave comrade, keep the rogues before thee,
dancing

At thy sword's point, but a few moments longer ;

Then I am with thee Farewell thou, Sibylla ;

He shall not perish thus Rise up, my men,

To horse with sword and spear, and follow flying.

I pledge thee, lady.

[*Takes the goblet.*

Ziba. (*Dashing it to the ground*) Flow wine, like
Moorish gore.

Ha ! it rings well and lies not. 'Tis right metal
For funeral bells.

Wolfr. Slave, what hast thou done ?

Ziba. Pour thou unto the subterranean gods
Libations of thy blood : I have shed wine,
Now, will ye not away ?

Wolfr. Come hither, dark one :
Say, on thy life, why hast thou spilt that wine ?

Ziba. A superstitious fancy . but now hence.
'Twas costly liquor too.

Wolfr. Then finish it.

'Twas well that fortune did reserve for you
These last and thickest drops here at the bottom.

Ziba. Drink them? forbid the prophet!

Wolfr. Slave, thou diest else.

Ziba. Give me the beaker then. O God, I dare not.
Death is too bitter so: alas! 'tis poison.

Sibyl. Pernicious caitiff!

Wolfr. Patience, my Sibylla!

I knew it by thy lying eye. Thou'rt pardoned.

I may not tread upon the toothless serpent.

But for thy lord, the Saracen deal with him

As he thinks fit. Wolfram can aid no murderer.

Sibyl. Mercy! O let me not cry out in vain:
Forgive him yet.

Wolfr. The crime I do forgive:

And Heaven, if he's forgiven there, preserve him!

O monstrous! in the moment when my heart

Looked back on him with the old love again,

Then was I marked for slaughter by his hand.

Forgive him? 'Tis enough. 'Tis much. Lie still

Thou sworded hand, and thou be steely heart.

Enter a third knight wounded

3rd Knight. Woe! woe! Duke Melveric is the
Arabs' captive.

Sibyl. Then Heaven have mercy on him!

Wolfr. So 'tis best:

He was o'erthrown and mastered by his passion,

As by a tiger. Death will burst the fetters.

3rd Knight. They bind him to a pillar in the desert,
And aim their poisoned arrows at his heart.

Wolfr. O Melveric, why didst thou so to me?

Sibylla, I despise this savage Duke,

But thus he shall not die. No man in bonds

Can be my enemy. He once was noble;

Once very noble. Let me set him free,

And we can then be knightly foes again.

Up, up, my men, once more and follow me.
I bring him to thee, love, or ne'er return.

Sibyl. A thousand tearful thanks for this. O
Wolfram ! [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV

A forest : the moonlit sea glistens between the trees

Enter Arabs with the DUKE

1st Arab. Against this column : there's an ancient
beast

Here in the neighbourhood, which to-night will thank us
For the ready meal

[*They bind the DUKE against a column.*]

2nd Arab. Christian, to thy houris
Boast that we took thy blood in recompense
Of our best comrades.

1st Arab Hast a saint or mistress?
Call on them for next minute comes the arrow.

Duke O Wolfram ! now methinks thou lift'st the
cup.

Strike quickly, Arab.

1st Arab. Brothers, aim at him.

Enter WOLFRAM and knights

Wolfr. Down, murderers, down.

2nd Arab. Fly ! there are hundreds on us.

[*Fight—the Arabs are beaten out and pursued by
the knights.*]

Wolfr. (*Unbinding the DUKE*) Thank heaven, not too
late ! Now you are free.

There is your life again.

Duke. Hast thou drunk wine ?

Answer me, knight, hast thou drunk wine this evening ?

Wolfr. Nor wine, nor poison. The slave told me all.
O Melveric, if I deserve it from thee,
Now canst thou mix my draught. But be't forgotten.

Duke. And wilt thou not now kill me ?

Wolfr. Let us strive
Henceforward with good deeds against each other,
And may you conquer there. Hence, and for ever,
No one shall whisper of that deadly thought.
Now we will leave this coast.

Duke. Aye, we will step
Into a boat and steer away : but whither ?

Think'st thou I'll live in the vile consciousness
That I have dealt so wickedly and basely,
And been of thee so like a god forgiven ?

No : 'tis impossible . . . Friend, by your leave—

[Takes a sword from a fallen Arab.]

O what a coward villain must I be
So to exist.

Wolfr. Be patient but awhile,
And all such thoughts will soften.

Duke. The grave be patient,
That's yawning at our feet for one of us.

I want no comfort. I am comfortable,
As any soul under the eaves of heaven
For one of us must perish in this instant
Fool, would thy virtue shame and crush me down ;
And make a grateful blushing bond-slave of me ?

O no ! I dare be wicked still the murderer,
My thought has christened me, I must remain.
O curse thy meek, forgiving, idiot heart.

That thus must take its womanish revenge,
And with the loathliest poison, pardon, kill me :
Twice-sentenced, die !

[Strikes at WOLFRAM.]

Wolfr. Madman, stand off.

Duke. I pay my thanks in steel,
Thus be all pardoners pardoned.

[Fight : WOLFRAM falls.]

Wolfr. Murderer ! mine and my father's ! O my brother,
Too true thy parting words . . . Repent thou never !
Duke. So then we both are blasted : but thou diest,
Who daredst to love athwart my love, discover,
And then forgive, my treachery. Now proclaim me.
Let my name burn through all dark history
Over the waves of time, as from a lighthouse,
Warning approach My worldly work is done.

ZIBA runs in

Ziba. They come, they come ; if thy thought be not yet
Incarnate in a deed, it is too late.
Is it a deed ?

Duke. Look at me.

Ziba. 'Tis enough.

Duke. See'st ? Know'st ? Be silent and be gone.

[*ZIBA retires : the knights re-enter with SIBYLLA.*]

Knight. O luckless victory ! our leader wounded !

Sibyl. Bleeding to death ! and he, whom he gave life to,

Even his own, unhurt and armed ! Speak, Wolfram :
Let me not think thou'rt dying.

Wolfr. But I am :

Slain villainously. Had I stayed, Sibylla—
But thou and life are lost ; so I'll be silent.

Sibyl. O Melveric, why kneel'st not thou beside him ?
Weep'st not with me ? For thee he fell. O speak !
Who did this, Wolfram ?

Wolfr. 'Tis well done, my Sibylla :

So burst the portals of sepulchral night
Before the immortal rising of the sun.

Sibyl. Who did this, Melveric ?

Duke. Let him die in quiet.

Hush ! there's a thought upon his lips again.

Wolfr. A kiss, Sibylla ! I ne'er yet have kissed thee,
And my new bride, death's lips are cold, they say.
Now it is darkening.

Sibyl. O not yet, not yet !
Who did this, Wolfram ?

Wolfr. *Thou know'st, Melveric :*
At the last day reply thou to that question,
When such an angel asks it : I'll not answer
Or then or now.

*[Dies. SIBYLLA throws herself on the body ; the DUKE
stands motionless ; the rest gather round in silence.
The scene closes.]*

A voice from the waters

The swallow leaves her nest,
The soul my weary breast ,
But therefore let the rain
On my grave
Fall pure ; for why complain ?
Since both will come again
O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow
Doth hurry to and fro ;
And, once, a day shall break
O'er the wave,
When a storm of ghosts shall shake
The dead, until they wake
In the grave.

ACT II

SCENE I. *The interior of a church at Ancona. The DUKE, in the garb of a pilgrim, SIBYLLA and knights assembled round the corpse of WOLFRAM, which is lying on a bier*

Duke

If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
 Then sleep, dear, sleep ;
And not a sorrow
 Hang any tear on your eyelashes ;
 Lie still and deep,
 Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun to-morrow,
 In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
 Then die, dear, die ,
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
 Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming
 With folded eye ;
 And then alone, amid the beaming
Of love's stars, thou'lt meet her
 In eastern sky.

Knight. These rites completed, say your further pleasure.

Duke. To horse and homewards in all haste : my business

Urges each hour. This body bury here,
With all due honours. I myself will build
A monument, whereon, in after times,
Those of his blood shall read his valiant deeds,
And see the image of the bodily nature

He was a man in. Scarcely dare I, lady,
Mock you with any word of consolation :
But soothing care, and silence o'er that sorrow,
Which thine own tears alone may tell to thee
Or offer comfort for ; and in all matters
What thy will best desires, I promise thee.
Wilt thou hence with us ?

Sibyl.

Whither yon will lead me.

My will lies there, my hope, and all my life
Which was in this world. Yet if I shed tear,
It is not for his death, but for my life.
Dead is he ? Say not so, but that he is
No more excepted from Eternity.
If he were dead I should indeed despair.
Can Wolfram die ? Ay, as the sun doth set
It is the earth that falls away from light,
Fixed in the heavens, although unseen by us,
The immortal life and light remains triumphant.
And therefore you shall never see me wail,
Or drop base waters of an ebbing sorrow ;
No wringing hands, no sighings, no despair.
No mourning weeds will I betake me to ;
But keep my thought of him that is no more
As secret as great nature keeps his soul
From all the world ; and consecrate my being
To that divinest hope which none can know of
Who have not laid their dearest in the grave.
Farewell, my love—I will not say to thee
Pale corpse—we do not part for many days.
A little sleep, a little waking more.
And then we are together out of life.

Duke. Cover the coffin up. This cold, calm stare
Upon familiar features is most dreadful :
Methinks too the expression of the face
Is changed, since all was settled gently there ;
And threatens now. But I have sworn to speak
And think of that no more, which has been done—

Now then into the bustle of the world !
We'll rub our cares smooth there.

Knight. This gate, my lord ;
There stand the horses.

Duke. Then we're mounted straight.
But, pri'thee, friend, forget not that the Duke
Is still in prison : I am a poor pilgrim. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED attended

Isbr. Dead and gone ! a scurvy burthen to } this
ballad of life There lies he, Siegfried ; my brother,
mark you , and I weep not, nor gnash the teeth, nor
curse : and why not, Siegfried ? Do you see this ? So
should every honest man be : cold, dead, and leaden-
coffined. This was one who would be constant in
friendship, and the pole wanders : one who would be
immortal, and the light that shines upon his pale fore-
head now, through yonder gewgaw window, undulated
from its star hundreds of years ago. That is constancy,
that is life. O moral nature !

Siegfr. 'Tis well that you are reconciled to his lot
and your own.

Isbr. Reconciled ! A word out of a love-tale, that's
not in my language. No, no. I am patient and still
and laborious, a good contented man ; peaceable as an
ass chewing a thistle ; and my thistle is revenge. I
do but whisper it now ; but hereafter I will thunder
the word, and I shall shoot up gigantic out of this
pismire shape, and hurl the bolt of that revenge.

Siegfr. To the purpose : the priests return to com-
plete the burial.

Isbr. Right : we are men of business here. Away
with the body, gently and silently ; it must be buried
in my duke's chapel in Silesia : why, hereafter. (*The
body is borne out by attendants.*) That way, fellows :
the hearse stands at the corner of the square : but
reverently, 'tis my brother you carry. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

A hall in the ducal castle of Munsterberg in the town of Grüssau in Silesia. THORWALD, ADALMAR, ATHULF, ISBRAND, SIEGFRIED ; the DUKE, disguised as a pilgrim ; AMALA ; and other ladies and knights ; conversing in various groups

Athulf. A fair and bright assembly : never strode
 Old arched Grüssau over such a tide
 Of helmed chivalry, as when to-day
 Our tourney guests swept, leaping billow-like,
 Its palace-banked streets. Knights shut in steel,
 Whose shields, like water, glassed the soul-eyed
 maidens,
 That softly did attend their armed tread,
 Flower-cinctured on the temples, whence gushed down
 A full libation of star-numbered tresses,
 Hallowing the neck unto love's silent kiss,
 Veiling its innocent white : and then came squires,
 And those who bore war's silken tapestries,
 And chequered heralds : 'twas a human river,
 Brimful and beating as if the great god,
 Who lay beneath it, would arise. So sways
 Time's sea, which Age snows into and makes deep,
 When, from the rocky side of the dim future,
 Leaps into it a mighty destiny,
 Whose being to endow great souls have been
 Centuries hoarded, and the world meanwhile
 Sate like a beggar upon Heaven's threshold,
 Muttering its wrongs.

Siegfr. My sprightly Athulf,
 Is it possible that you can waste the day,
 Which throws these pillared shades among such beauties,
 In lonely thought ?

Athulf. Why I have left my cup,

A lady's lips, dropping with endless kusses,
Because your minstrels hushed their harps. Why did
they ?

This music, which they tickle from the strings,
Is excellent for drowning ears that gape,
When one has need of whispers.

Siegfr. The old governor
Would have it so his morning nap being o'er,
He's no more need of music, but is moving
Straight to the lists

Athulf A curse on that mock war !
How it will shake and sour the blood, that now
Is quiet in the men ! And there's my brother,
Whose sword's his pleasure. A mere savage man,
Made for the monstrous times, but left out then,
Born by mistake with us.

Adalm. (To ISBRAND) Be sure 'tis heavy.
One lance of mine a wolf shut his jaws on
But cracked it not, you'll see his bite upon it :
It lies among the hunting weapons.

Isbr. Aye,
With it I saw you once scratch out of life
A blotted Moor.

Adalm. The same ; it poises well,
And falls right heavy : find it. [*Exit ISBRAND.*]

Siegfr. For the tilt,
My brave lord Adalmar ?

Athulf. What need of asking ?
You know the man is sore upon a couch
But upright, on his bloody-hoofed steed
Galloping o'er the ruins of his foes,
Whose earthquake he hath been, then will he shout,
Laugh, run his tongue along his trembling lip,
And swear his heart tastes honey.

Siegfr. Nay, thou'rt harsh ;
He was the axe of Mars ; but, Troy being felled,
Peace trims her bower with him.

Athulf. Aye ; in her hand
He's iron still.

Adalm. I care not, brother Athulf,
Whether you're right or wrong : 'tis very certain,
Thank God for it, I am not Peace's lap-dog,
But Battle's shaggy whelp. Perhaps, even soon,
Good friend of Bacchus and the rose, you'll feel
Your budding wall of dalliance shake behind you,
And need my spear to prop it.

Athulf. Come the time !
You'll see that in our veins runs brothers' blood.

A Lady. Is Siegfried here ? At last ! I've sought
for you
By every harp and every lady's shoulder,
Not ever thinking you could breathe the air
That ducal cub of Mnnsterberg makes frightful
With his loud talk.

Siegfr. Happy in my error,
If thus to be corrected.

Re-enter ISBRAND

Isbr. The lance, my lord :
A delicate tool to breathe a heathen's vein with.

The Lady. What, Isbrand, thou a soldier ? Fie upon
thee !

Is this a weapon for a fool ?

Isbr. Madam I pray thee pardon us. The fair have
wrested the tongue from us, and we must give our
speeches a tongue of some metal—steel or gold. And
I beseech thee, lady, call me fool no more : I grow
old, and in old age you know what men become. We
are at court, and there it were sin to call a thing by its
right name : therefore call me a fool no longer, for my
wisdom is on the wane, and I am almost as sententious
as the governor.

The Lady. Excellent : wilt thou become court-
confessor ?

Isbr. Aye, if thou wilt begin with thy secrets, lady. But my fair mistress, and you, noble brethren, I pray you gather around me. I will now speak a word in earnest, and hereafter jest with you no more : for I lay down my profession of folly. Why should I wear bells to ring the changes of your follies on ? Doth the besonneted moon wear bells, she that is the parasite and zany of the stars, and your queen, ye apes of madness ? As I live I grow ashamed of the duality of my legs, for they and the apparel, forked or furbelowed, upon them constitute humanity ; the brain no longer ; and I wish I were an honest fellow of four shuns when I look into the note-book of your absurdities. I will abdicate.

The Lady. Brave ! but how dispose of your dominions, most magnanimous zany ?

Isbr. My heirs at law are manifold. Yonder minister shall have my jacket ; he needs many colours for his deeds. You shall inherit my mantle ; for your sins (be it whispered) chatter with the teeth for cold ; and charity, which should be their greatcoat, you have not in the heart

The Lady. Gramercy : but may I not beg your coxcomb for a friend ?

Isbr. The brothers have an equal claim to that crest : they may tilt for it. But now for my crown. O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hieroglyphics of man's supreme right in nature ; O ye, that only fall on the deserving, while oak, palm, laurel, and bay rankle on *their* foreheads, whose deserts are oft more payable at the other extremity : who shall be honoured with you ? Come candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

The Lady. Those you should send to England, for the bad poets and the critics who praise them.

Isbr. Albeit worthy, those merry men cannot this once obtain the prize. I will yield Death the crown

of folly. He hath no hair, and in this weather might catch cold and die: besides he has killed the best knight I knew, Sir Wolfram, and deserves it. Let him wear the cap, let him toll the bells; he shall be our new court-fool and, when the world is old and dead, the thin wit shall find the angel's record of man's works and deeds, and write with a lipless grin on the innocent first page for a title, 'Here begins Death's Jest-book'.—There, you have my testament: henceforth speak solemnly to me, and I will give a measured answer, having relapsed into court-wisdom again.

The Lady. How the wild jester would frighten us!

Come, Siegfried:

Some of us in a corner wait your music,
Your news, and stories. My lord Adalmar,
You must be very weary all this time,
The rest are so delighted. Come along, [To SIEGFRIED.
Or else his answer stuns me.

Adalm. Joyous creature!

Whose life's first leaf is hardly yet uncurled.

Athulf. Use your trade's language; were I journey
man

To Mars, the glorious butcher, I would say
She's sleek, and sacrificial flowers would look well
On her white front.

Adalm. Now, brother, can you think,

Stern as I am above, that in my depth
There is no cleft wherein such thoughts are hived
As from dear looks and words come back to me,
Storing that honey, love. O! love I do,
Through every atom of my being.

Athulf. Aye,

So do we young ones all. In winter time
This god of butterflies, this Cupid sleeps,
As they do in their cases; but May comes;
With it the bee and he: each spring of mine
He sends me a new arrow, thank the boy.

A week ago he shot me for this year ;
The shaft is in my stomach, and so large
There's scarcely room for dinner.

Adalm.

Shall I believe thee,

Or judge mortality by this stout sample
I screw my mail o'er ? Well, it may be so ;
You are an adept in these chamber passions,
And have a heart that's Cupid's arrow cushion
Worn out with use I never knew before
The meaning of this love But one has taught me,
It is a heaven wandering among men,
The spirit of gone Eden haunting earth.
Life's joys, death's pangs are viewless from its bosom,
Which they who keep are gods ; there's no paradise,
There is no heaven, no angels, no blessed spirits
No souls, or they have no eternity,
If this be not a part of them.

Athulf.

This in a Court !

Such sort of love might Hercules have felt
Warm from the Hydra fight, when he had fattened
On a fresh-slain Bucentaur, roasted whole,
The heart of his pot-belly, till it ticked
Like a cathedral clock. But in good faith
Is this the very truth ? Then have I found
My fellow fool. For I am wounded too
E'en to the quick and inmost, Adalmar.
So fair a creature ! of such charms compact
As nature stints elsewhere ; which you may find
Under the tender eyelid of a serpent,
Or in the gurge of a kiss-coloured rose,
By drops and sparks : but when she moves, you see,
Like water from a crystal overfilled,
Fresh beauty tremble out of her and lave
Her fair sides to the ground. Of other women,
(And we have beauteous in this court of ours,)
I can remember whether nature touched
Their eye with brown or azure, where a vein

Runs o'er a sleeping eyelid, like some streak
In a young blossom ; every grace count up,
Here the round turn and crevice of the arm,
There the tress-bunches, or the slender hand
Seen between harpstrings gathering music from them :
But where she is, I'm lost in her abundance
And when she leaves me I know nothing more,
(Like one from whose awakening temples rolls
The cloudy vision of a god away),
Than that she was divine.

Adalm. Fie sir, these are the spiced sighs of a heart,
That bubbles under wine ; utter rhyme-gilding,
Beneath man's sober use. What do you speak of ?

Athulf. A woman most divine, and that I love
As you dare never.

Adalm. Boy, a truce with talk.
Such words are sacred, placed within man's reach
To be used seldom, solemnly, when speaking
Of what both God and man might overhear,
You unabashed.

Athulf. Of what ? What is more worthy
Than the delight of youth, being so rare,
Precious, short-lived, and irrecoverable ?

Adalm. When you do mention that adored land,
Which gives you life, pride, and security,
And holy rights of freedom ; or in the praise
Of those great virtues and heroic men,
That glorify the earth and give it beams,
Then to be lifted by the like devotion
Would not disgrace God's angels.

Athulf. Well, sir, laud,
Worship, and swear by them, your native country
And virtues past ; a phantom and a corpse :
Such airy stuff may please you. My desires
Are hot and hungry ; they will have their fill
Of living dalliance, gazes, and lip-touches,
Or eat their master. Now, no more rebuking :

Peace be between us. For why are we brothers,
Being the creatures of two different gods,
But that we may not be each other's murderers?

Adalm. So be it then! But mark me, brother
Athulf,

I spoke not from a cold unnatural spirit,
Barren of tenderness. I feel and know
Of woman's dignity : how it doth merit
Our total being : his all mine this moment
But they should share with us our level lives :
Moments there are, and one is now at hand,
Too high for them. When all the world is stirred
By some preluding whisper of that trumpet,
Which shall awake the dead, to do great things,
Then the sublimity of my affection,
The very height of my beloved, shows me
How far above her's glory. When you've earned
This knowledge, tell me : I will say, you love
As a man should. [*He retires.*]

Athulf. But this is somewhat true.
I almost think that I could feel the same
For her. For *her*? By heavens, 'tis Amala,
Amala only, that he so can love.
There? by her side? in conference! at smiles!
Then I am born to be a fratricide.
I feel as I were killing him. Tush, tush;
A phantom of my passion! But, if true—
What? What, my heart? A strangely-quiet thought,
That will not be pronounced, doth answer me.

THORWALD comes forward, attended by the company

Thorw. Break up! The day's of age. Knights to
the lists,
And ladies to look on. We'll break some lances
Before 'tis evening. To your sports, I pray;
I follow quickly. [*He is left alone with the DUKE.*]

Pilgrim, now your news :

Whence come you ?

Duke. Straightway from the holy land,
Whose sanctity such floods of human blood,
Unnatural rain for it, will soon wash out.

Thorw. You saw our Duke ?

Duke. I did : but Melveric
Is strangely altered. When we saw him leap,
Shut up in iron, on his burning steed
From Grüssau's threshold, he had fifty years
Upon his head, and bore them straight and upright,
Through dance, and feast, and knightly tournament,

Thorw. How ! Is he not the same ? 'Tis but three
years
And a fourth's quarter past. What is the change ?
A silvering of the hair ? a deeper wrinkle
On cheek and forehead ?

Duke. I do not think you'd know him,
Stood he where I do. No. I saw him lying
Beside a fountain on a battle-evening :
The sun was setting over the heaped plain ;
And to my musing fancy his front's furrows,
With light between them, seemed the grated shadow
Thrown by the ribs of that field's giant, Death ;
'Twixt which the finger of the hour did write
'This is the grave's'.

Thorw. How ? Looked he sorrowful ?
Knows he the dukedom's state ?

Duke. (*Giving letters to THORWALD*) Ask these. He's
heard

• The tidings that afflict the souls of fathers ;
How these two sons of his unfilially
Have vaulted to the saddle of the people,
And charge against him. How he gained the news,
You must know best : what countermines he digs,
Those letters tell your eyes. He bade me say,
His dukedom is his body, and, he forth,

That may be sleeping, but the touch of wrong,
The murderer's barefoot tread will bring him back
Out of his Eastern visions, ere this earth
Has swung the city's length.

Thorw. I read as much :
He bids me not to move ; no eye to open,
But to sit still and doze, and warm my feet
At their eruption. This security
Is most unlike him. I remember oft,
When the thin harvests shed their withered grain,
And empty poverty yelped sour-mouthed at him,
How he would cloud his majesty of form
With priestly hangings, or the tattered garb
Of the step-seated beggar, and go round
To catch the tavern talk and the street ballad,
And whispers of ancestral prophecies,
Until he knew the very nick of time,
When his heart's arrow would be on the string ;
And, seizing Treason by the arm, would pour
Death back upon him.

Duke. He is wary still,
And has a snake's eye under every grass.
Your business is obedience unto him,
Who is your natal star ; and mine, to worm,
Leaf after leaf, into the secret volume
Of their designs. Already has our slave,
The grape juice, left the side-door of the youngest
Open to me. You think him innocent.
Fire flashes from him ; whether it be such
As treason would consult by, or the coals
Love boils his veins on, shall through this small crevice,
Through which the vine has thrust its cunning tendril,
Be looked and listened for.

Thorw. Can I believe it ?
Did not I know him and his spirit's course,
Well as the shape and colour of the sun,
And when it sets and rises ? Is this he ?

No : 'tis the shadow of this pilgrim false,
 Who stands up in his height of villany,
 Shadowy as a hill, and throws his hues
 Of contradiction to the heavenly light,
 The stronger as it shines upon him most.
 Ho ! pilgrim, I have weighed and found thee villain.
 Are thy knees used to kneeling ? It may chance
 That thou wilt change the altar for the block ;
 Prove thou'rt his messenger.

Duke. I wait your questions.
 The very inmost secret of his heart,
 Confided to you, challenge from me.

Thorw. First,
 A lighter trial. If you come from him,
 Tell me what friend he spoke of most.

Duke. Of thee.

Thorw. Another yet.
 A knight ?

Duke. There is no living knight his friend.

Thorw. O ill guessed, palmer ! One, whom Melveric
 Would give his life, all but his virtue for,
 Lived he no more, to raise him from the dead.

Duke. Right ; he would give his soul ; Thorwald,
 his soul :

Friendship is in its depth, and secrets sometimes
 Like to a grave.—So loved the Duke that warrior.

Thorw. Enough, his name ;—the name ?

Duke Aye, aye, *the name*—
 Methinks there's nothing in the world but names :
 All things are dead ; friendship at least I'll blot
 From my vocabulary. The man was called—
 The knight—I cannot utter't—the knight's name—
 Why dost thou ask me ? I know nothing of him.
 I have not seen or heard of him, of—Well,
 I'll speak of him to no man more—

Thorw. Tremble then
 When thou dost hear of —Wolfram ! thou art pale :

Confess, or to the dungeon—

Duke. Pause ! I am stuffed
With an o'erwhelming spirit : press not thou,
Or I shall burst asunder, and let through
The deluging presence of thy duke. Prepare :
He's near at hand.

Thorw. Forbid it, Providence !
He steps on a plot's spring, whose teeth encircle
The throne and city

Duke (*Disturbed*) Fear not On he comes,
Still as a star robed in eclipse, until
The earthy shadow slips away. Who rises ?
I'm changing now who am I ?

Thorw. Melveric !
Munsterberg, as I live and love thee !

Duke. Hush !
Is there not danger ?

Thorw. Aye : we walk on ice
Over the mouth of Hell : an inch beneath us,
Dragon Rebellion lies ready to wake.
Ha ! and behold him.

Enter ADALMAR

Adalm. Lord Governor, our games are waiting for
you.

Will you come with me ? Base and muffled stranger,
What dost thou here ? Away.

Duke. Prince Adalmar,
Where shall you see me ? I will come again,
This or the next world. Thou, who carnest
The seeds of a new world, may'st understand me.
Look for me ever. There's no crack without me
In earth and all around it. Governor,
Let all things happen, as they will. Farewell :
Tremble for no one.

Adalm. Hence ! The begging monk
Prates emptily.

Duke Believe him.

Thorw. Well, lead on ;

Wert thou a king, I would not more obey thee.

[*Exit with ADALMAR.*]

Duke. Rebellion, treason, parricidal daggers !

This is the bark of the court dogs, that come
Welcoming home their master. My sons too,
Even my sons ! O not sons, but contracts,
Between my lust and a destroying fiend,
Written in my dearest blood, whose date ran out,
They are become death-warrants. Parricide,
And Murder of the heart that loved and nourished,
Be merry, ye rich fiends ! Piety's dead,
And the world left a legacy to you.

Under the green-sod are your coffins packed,
So thick they break each other. The days come
When scarce a lover, for his maiden's hair
Can pluck a stalk whose rose draws not its hue
Out of a hate-killed heart. Nature's polluted,
There's man in every secret corner of her,
Doing damned wicked deeds. Thon art old, world,
A hoary atheistic murderers star :
I wish that thou would'st die, or could'st be slain,
Hell-hearted bastard of the sun.

O that the twenty coming years were over !
Then should I be at rest, where ruined arches
Shut out the troublesome unghostly day ;
And idlers might be sitting on my tomb,
Telling how I did die. How shall I die ?
Fighting my sons for power ; or of dotage,
Sleeping in purple pressed from filial veins ;
To let my epitaph be, ' Here lies he,
Who murdered his two children ? ' Hence cursed
thought !

I will enquire the purpose of their plot :
There may be good in it, and, if there be,
I'll be a traitor too.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III

A retired gallery in the ducal castle

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED

Isbr. Now see you how this dragon egg of ours
Swells with its ripening plot ? Methinks I hear
Snaky rebellion turning restless in it,
And with its horny jaws seraping away
The shell that hides it All is ready now :
I hold the latch-string of a new world's wicket ;
One pull and it rolls in. Bid all our friends
Meet in that ruinous churchyard once again,
By moonrise ; until then I'll hide myself ;
For these sweet thoughts rise dimpling to my lips,
And break the dark stagnation of my features,
Like sugar melting in a glass of poison.
To-morrow, Siegfried, shalt thou see me sitting
One of the drivers of this raeing earth,
With Grussau's reins between my fingers Ha !
Never since Hell laughed at the church, blood-drunken
From rack and wheel, has there been joy so mad
As that which stings my marrow now.

Siegfr. Good cause,
The sun-glance of a coming crown to heat you,
And give your thoughts gay colours in the steam
Of a fermenting brain.

Isbr. Not alone that.
A seepre is smooth handling, it is true,
And one grows fat and jolly in a chair
That has a kingdom erouching under it.
With one's name on its collar, like a dog
To fetch and carry. But the heart I have
Is a strange little snake. He drinks not wine,
When he'd be drunk, but poison : he doth fatten

On bitter hate, not love. And, O that duke !
My life is hate of him ; and, when I tread
His neck into the grave, I shall, methinks,
Fall into ashes with the mighty joy,
Or be transformed into a winged star :
That will be all eternal heaven distilled
Down to one thick rich minute. This sounds madly,
But I am mad when I remember him :
Siegfried, you know not why.

Siegfr. I never knew
That you had quarrelled.
Isbr. True : but did you see
My brother's corpse ? There was a wound on't, Siegfried ;
He died not gently, nor in a ripe age ;
And I'll be sworn it was the duke that did it,
Else he had not remained in that far land,
And sent his knights to us again.

Siegfr. I thought
He was the duke's close friend.
Isbr. Close as his blood :
A double-bodied soul they did appear,
Rather than fellow hearts.

Siegfr. I've heard it told
That they did swear and write in their best blood,
And her's they loved the most, that who died first
Should, on death's holidays, revisit him
Who still dwelt in the flesh.

Isbr. O that such bond
Would move the jailor of the grave to open
Life's gate again unto my buried brother,
But half an hour ! Were I buried, like him,
There in the very garrets of death's town,
But six feet under earth (that's the grave's sky),
I'd jump up into life. But he's a quiet ghost ;
He walks not in the churchyard after dew,
But gets to his grave betimes, burning no glow-worms,

Sees that his bones are right, and stints his worms
Most miserly. If you were murdered, Siegfried,
As he was by this duke, should it be so ?

Siegfr. Here speaks again your passion : what know
we

Of Death's commandments to his subject-spirits,
Who are as yet the body's citizens ?
What seas unnavigable what wild forests
What castles and what ramparts there may hedge
His icy frontier

Isbr. Tower and roll what may,
There have been goblins bold who have stolen pass-
ports,

Or sailed the sea, or leaped the wall, or flung
The drawbridge down, and travelled back again.
So would my soul have done. But let it be
At the doom-twilight shall the ducal cut-throat
Wake by a tomb-fellow he little dreamt of.
Methinks I see them rising with mixed bones,
A pair of patchwork angels.

Siegfr. What does this mean ?

Isbr. A pretty piece of kidnapping that's all
When Melveric's heart's heart, his new-wed wife
Upon the bed whereon she bore these sons,
Died, as a blossom does whose inmost fruit
Tears it in twain, and in its stead remains
A bitter poison-berry : when she died,
What her soul left was by her husband laid
In the marriage grave, whereto he doth consign
Himself being dead.

Siegfr. Like a true loving mate.
Is not her tomb 'mid the cathedral ruins,
Where we to-night assemble ?

Isbr. Say not her's :
A changeling lies there. By black night came I,
And, while a man might change two goblets' liquors,
I laid the lips of their two graves together,

And poured my brother into hers ; while she,
 Being the lightest, floated and ran over.
 Now lies the murdered where the loved should be ;
 And Melveric the dead shall dream of heaven,
 Embracing his damnation. There's revenge.
 But hush ! here comes one of my dogs, the princes ;
 To work with you. *[Exit Siegfried.]*

Now for another shape ;
 For Isbrand is the handle of the chisels
 Which Fate, the turner of men's lives, doth use
 Upon the wheeling world.

Enter ATHULF

There is a passion
 Lighting his cheek, as red as brother's hate :
 If it be so, these pillars shall go down,
 Shivering each other, and their runs be
 My step into a dukedom. Doth he speak ?
Athulf. Then all the minutes of my life to come
 Are sands of a great desert, into which
 I'm banished broken-hearted. Amala,
 I must think thee a lovely-faced murderess,
 With eyes as dark and poisonous as nightshade ;
 Yet no, not so ; if thou hadst murdered me,
 It had been charitable. Thou hast slain
 The love of thee, that lived in my soul's palace
 And made it holy : now 'tis desolate,
 And devils of abandonment will haunt it,
 And call in Sins to come, and drink with them
 Out of my heart. But now farewell, my love ;
 For thy rare sake I could have been a man
 One storey under God. Gone, gone art thou.
 Great and voluptuous Sin now seize upon me,
 Thou paramour of Hell's fire-crowned king,
 That showedst the tremulous fairness of thy bosom
 In heaven, and so didst ravish the best angels.
 Come, pour thy spirit all about my soul,

And let a glory of thy bright desires
Play round about my temples. So may I
Be thy knight and Hell's saint for evermore.
Kiss me with fire : I'm thine.

Isbr. Doth it run so ?

A bold beginning : we must keep him up to't.

Athulf Isbrand !

Isbr. My prince

Athulf Come to me Thou'rt a man

I must know more of There is something in thee,
The deeper one doth venture in thy being.
That drags us on and down. What dost thou lead to ?
Art thou a current to some unknown sea
Islanded richly, full of syren songs
And unknown bliss ? Art thou the snaky opening
Of a dark cavern, where one may converse
With might's dear spirits ? If thou'rt one of these,
Let me descend thee.

Isbr. You put questions to me

In an Egyptian or old magic tongue,
Which I can ill interpret

Athulf. Passion's hieroglyphics ;

Painted upon the minutes by mad thoughts,
Dungeoned in misery. Isbrand, answer me ;
Art honest, or a man of many deeds
And many faces to them ? Thou'rt a plotter,
A politician. Say, if there should come
A fellow, with his being just abandoned
By old desires and hopes, who would do much—
And who doth much upon this grave-paved star,
In doing, must sin much—would quick and straight,
Sword-straight and poison-quick, have done with doing ;
Would you befriend him ?

Isbr. I can lend an arm

To good bold purpose. But you know me not,
And I will not be known before my hour.
Why come you here wishing to raise the devil,

And ask me how ? Where are your sacrifices ?
Eye-water is not his libation, prayers
Reach him not through earth's chinks. Bold deeds
and thoughts,

What men call crimes, are his loved litany ;
And from all such good angels keep us ' Now sir,
What makes you fretful ?

Athulf. I have lost that hope,
For which alone I lived. Henceforth my days
Are purposeless ; there is no reason further
Why I should be, or should let others be ;
No motive more for virtue, for forbearance,
Or anything that's good. The hourly need,
And the base bodily cravings, must be now
The aim of this deserted human engine.
Good may be in this world, but not for me ,
Gentle and noble hearts, but not for me ,
And happiness, and heroism, and glory,
And love, but none for me. Let me then wander
Amid their banquets, funerals, and weddings,
Like one whose living spirit is Death's Angel.

Isbr. What ? You have lost your love and so turned
sour ?

And who has ta'en your chair in Amala's heaven ?

Athulf. My brother, my Cam ; Adalmar.

Isbr. I'll help thee, prince :
When will they marry ?

Athulf. I could not wish him in my rage to die
Sooner : one night I'd give him to dream hells.
To-morrow, Isbrand.

Isbr. Sudden, by my life.
But, out of the black interval, we'll cast
Something upon the moment of their joy,
Which, should it fail to blot, shall so deform it,
That they must write it further down in time.

Athulf. Let it be crossed with red.

Isbr. Trust but to me :

I'll get you bliss. But I am of a sort
Not given to affections. Sire and mother
And sister I had never, and so feel not
Why sin 'gainst them should count so doubly wicked,
This side o' th' sun. It you would wound your foe,
Get swords that pierce the mind : a bodily slice
Is cured by surgeon's butter let true hate
Leap the flesh wall or fling his fiery deeds
Into the soul So he can marry, Athult,
And then—

Athult Peace, wicked-hearted slave !
Darest thou tempt me ? I called on thee for service,
But thou wouldst set me at a hellish work,
To cut my own damnation out of Lust :
Thou'dst sell me to the fiend Thou and thy master,
That sooty beast the devil, shall be my dogs,
My curs to kick and beat when I would have you.
I will not bow, nor follow at his bidding,
For his hell-throne. No : I will have a god
To serve my purpose ; Hatred be his name ;
But 'tis a god divine in wickedness
Whom I will worship [Exit.

Isbr. Then go where Pride and Madness carry thee :
And let that feasted fatness pine and shrink,
Till thy ghost's pinched in the tight love-lean body.
I see his life, as in a map of rivers,
Through shadows, over rocks, breaking its way,
Until it meet his brother's, and with that
Wrestle and tumble o'er a perilous rock,
Bare as Death's shoulder one of them is lost,
And a dark haunted flood creeps deadly on
Into the wailing Styx. Poor Amala !
A thorny rose thy life is, plucked in the dew,
And pitilessly woven with these snakes
Into a garland for the King of the grave. [Exit.

ACT III

SCENE I. *An apartment in the ducal castle**The DUKE and THORWALD*

Duke. Let them be married : give to Adalmar
The sweet society of woman's soul,
As we impregnate Damask swords with odour
Pressed from young flowers' bosoms, so to sweeten
And purify war's lightning. For the other,
Who catches love by eyes, the court has stars,
That will take up in his tempestuous bosom
The shining place she leaves.

Thorw. It shall be done :
The bell, that will ring merrily for their bridal,
Has but few hours to score first.

Duke. Good. I have seen too
Our ripe rebellion's ringleaders. They meet
By moonrise ; with them I : to-night will be
Fiends' jubilee, with heaven's spy among them.
What else was't that you asked ?

Thorw. The melancholy lady you brought with
you ?

Duke. Thorwald, I fear her's is a broken heart.
When first I met her in the Egyptian prison,
She was the rosy morning of a woman ;
Beauty was rising, but the starry grace
Of a calm childhood might be seen in her.
But since the death of Wolfram, who fell there,
Heaven and one single soul only know how,
I have not dared to look upon her sorrow.

Thorw. Methinks she's too unearthly beautiful.
Old as I am, I cannot look at her,
And hear her voice, that touches the heart's core,

Without a dread that she will fade o' th' instant.
There's too much heaven in her . oft it rises,
And, pouring out about the lovely earth,
Almost dissolves it. She is tender too ;
And melancholy is the sweet pale smile,
With which she gently doth reproach her fortune.

Duke. What ladies tend her ?

Thorw. My Amala , she will not often see
One of the others

Duk. Too much solitude
Maintains her in this grief . I will look to't
Hereafter , for the present I've enough.
We must not meet again before to-morrow.

Thorw. I may have something to report . . .

Duke. Ho ! Ziba.

Enter ZIBA

Ziba. Lord of my life !

Duke. I bought this man of Afric from an Arab,
Under the shadow of a pyramid
For many jewels . He hath skill in language ;
And knowledge is in him root, flower, and fruit,
A palm with winged imagination in it,
Whose roots stretch even underneath the grave,
And on them hangs a lamp of magic science
In his soul's deepest mine, where folded thoughts
Lie sleeping on the tombs of magi dead :
So said his master when he parted with him.
I know him skilful, faithful , take him with you ;
He's fit for many services

Thorw. I'll try him :
Wilt thou be faithful, Moor ?

Ziba. As soul to body.

Thorw. Then follow me. Farewell, my noble
pilgrim. [*Exeunt THORWALD and ZIBA.*]

Duke. It was a fascination, near to madness,

Which held me subjugated to that maiden.
 Why do I now so coldly speak of her,
 When there is nought between us ? O ! there is,
 A deed as black as the old towers of Hell.
 But hence ! thou torturing weakness of remorse ;
 'Tis time when I am dead to think on that :
 Yet my sun shines ; so courage, heart, cheer up :
 Who should be merrier than a secret villain ? *[Exit.]*

SCENE II

Another room in the same

• SIBYLLA and AMALA

Sibyl. I would I were a fairy, Amala,
 Or knew some of those winged wizard women,
 Then I could bring you a more precious gift.
 'Tis a wild graceful flower, whose name I know not ;
 Call it Sibylla's love, while it doth live ;
 And let it die that you may contradict it,
 And say my love doth not, so bears no fruit
 Take it. I wish that happiness may ever
 Flow through your days as sweetly and as still,
 As did the beauty and the life to this
 Out of its roots.

Amala. Thanks, my kind Sibylla :
 To-morrow I will wear it at my wedding.
 Since that must be.

Sibyl. Art thou then discontented ?
 I thought the choice was thine, and Adalmar
 A noble warrior worthy of his fortune.

Amala. O yes ; brave, honourable is my bride-
 groom,
 But somewhat cold perhaps. If his wild brother

Had but more constancy and less insolence
 In love, he were a man much to my heart.
 But, as it is, I must, I will be happy ;
 And Adalmar deserves that I should love him.
 But see how night o'ertakes us. Good rest, dear :
 We will no more profane sleep's stillest hour.

Sibyl. Good-night, then.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III

A churchyard with the ruins of a spacious gothic cathedral. On the cloister walls the DANCE OF DEATH is painted. On one side the sepulchre of the Dukes with massy carved folding doors. Moonlight

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED

Isbr. Not here ? That wolf-howled, witch-prayed,
 owl-sung fool,

Fat mother moon hath brought the cats their light
 A whole thief's hour, and yet they are not met.
 I thought the bread and milky thick-spread lies,
 With which I plied them, would have drawn to head
 The state's bad humours quickly.

Siegfr.

They delay

Until the twilight strollers are gone home.

Isbr. That may be. This is a sweet place methinks :
 These arches and their caves, now double-nighted
 With heaven's and that creeping darkness, ivy,
 Delight me strangely. Ruined churches oft,
 As this, are crime's chief haunt, as ruined angels
 Straight become fiends. This tomb too tickleth me
 With its wild-rose branches. Dost remember, Siegfried,
 About the buried Duchess ? In this cradle
 I placed the new dead : here the changeling lies.

Siegfr. Are we so near ? A frightful theft !

Ibr. *Heard I should!*
Peace; there's a fast sleep on the pavement.

Enter the Duke

Alc. comes

I thank you, wanderer, for coming late.
They of the town lay still.

Duke. *The entry goes.*
And you its head, you, please me.

Ibr. *You are courteous.*

Duke. Better; I'm honest. But your ear and eye
Are so familiar to my memory,

That I could almost think we had been friends
Since our now ripen and declining lives

Undid their outer leaves.

Ibr. *I can remember*
No earlier meeting. What fool of it? Methinks
We agree well enough.

As you have brought *Leviathan* of the Duke.

Ibr. *There are* *If I had time,*
the Duke *and less disturbed thoughts, I'd search my memory*
For what thou'rt like. Now we have other matters
And talk about.

Take *'sbr.* *And, thank the stungy star-shine,*
Flow *'e* the shades of others of our council

As did

Out of *Enter ADAMMAN and other conspirators*

Amalah late met, well met friends. Where stay the
To-morrowest?

Sir still few here.

They are contented
'e steps proposed, and keep their chambers
Nigh the suspecting crowd of eyes,

'e youth feed with sights for nightly gossip.

'e strikes.

hat cold *That's well to keep at home,*

And hide, as doth Heaven's wrath, till the last minute.
Little's to say. We fall as gently on them,
As the first drops of Noah's world-washing shower
Upon the birds' wings and the leaves. Give each
A copy of this paper : it contains
A quick receipt to make a new creation
In our old dukedom. Here stands he who framed it.

Adalm The unknown pilgrim ! You have warrant,
Isbrand.

For trusting him ?

Isbr I have

Adalm Enough. How are the citizens ?
You feasted them these three days.

Isbr. And have them by the heart for't.
'Neath Grüssau's tiles sleep none, whose deepest
bosom

My fathom hath not measured ; none, whose thoughts
I have not made a map of. In the depth
And labyrinthine home of the still soul,
Where the seen thing is imaged, and the whisper
Joins the expecting spirit, nix spies, which are
Suspicion's creeping words have stolen in.
And, with their eyed feelers, touched and sounded
The little hiding holes of cunning thought,
And each dark crack in which a reptile purpose
Hangs in its chrysalis unripe for birth.
All of each heart I know.

Duke. O perilous boast !
Fathom the wavy caverns of all stars,
Know every side of every sand in earth,
And hold in little all the lore of man,
As a dew's drop doth miniature the sun ·
But never hope to learn the alphabet,
In which the hieroglyphic human soul
More changeably is painted, than the rainbow
Upon the cloudy pages of a shower,
Whose thunderous hinges a wild wind doth turn.

Know all of each ! when each doth shift his thought
More often in a minute, than the air
Dust on a summer path.

Isbr. Liquors can lay them :
Grape-juice or vein-juice.

Duke. Yet there may be one,
Whose misty mind's perspective still lies hid.

Isbr. Ha ! stranger, where ?

Duke. A quiet, listening, flesh-concealed soul.

Isbr. Are the ghosts eavesdropping ? None, that
do live,

Listen besides ourselves. .

A struggle behind : Siegfried drags MARIO forward.
Who's there ?

Siegfr. A fellow,
Who crouched behind the bush, dipping his ears
Into the stream of your discourse.

Isbr. Come forward.

Mario. Then lead me. Were it noon, I could not
find him

Whose voice commands me : in these callous hands
There is as much perception for the light,
As in the depth of my poor dayless eyes.

Isbr. Thy hand then.

Mario. Art thou leader here ?

Isbr. Perchance.

Mario. Then listen, as I listened unto you,
And let my life and story end together,
If it seem good to you. A Roman am I ;
A Roman in unroman times : I've slept
At midnight in our Capitolian ruins,
And breathed the ghost of our great ancient world,
Which there doth walk : and among glorious visions,
That the unquiet tombs sent forth to me,
Learned I the love of freedom. Scipio saw I
Washing the stains of Carthage from his sword,
And his freed poet, playing on his lyre

A melody men's souls did sing unto .
 Oak-bound and laurelled heads, each man a country ;
 And in the midst, like a sun o'er the sea
 (Each helm in the crowd gilt by a ray from him),
 Bald Julius sitting lonely in his car,
 Within the circle of whose laurel wreath
 All spirits of the earth and sea were spell-bound
 Down with him to the grave ! Down with the god !
 Stab, Cassius ; Brutus, through him , through him, all !
 Dead.—As he fell there was a tearing sigh .
 Earth stood on him ; her roots were in his heart ;
 They fell together. Cæsar and his world
 Lie in the Capitol ; and Jove lies there,
 With all the gods of Rome and of Olympus ,
 Corpses : and does the eagle batten on them ?
 No ; she is flown : the owl sits in her nest ;
 The toge is cut for cows ; and falsehood dozes
 In the chair of freedom, triple-crowned beast,
 King Cerberus. Thence I have come in time
 To see one grave for foul oppression dug,
 Though I may share it

Isbr. Nay thou'rt a bold heart.

Welcome among us.

Mario. I was guided hither
 By one in white, garlanded like a bride,
 Divinely beautiful, leading me softly ;
 And she doth place my hand in thine, once more
 Bidding me guard her honour amongst men ;
 And so I will, with death to him that soils it .
 For she is Liberty.

Adalm. In her name we take thee ,
 And for her sake welcome thee brotherly.
 At the right time thou comest to us, dark man,
 Like an eventful unexpected night,
 Which finishes a row of plotting days,
 Fulfilling their designs.

Isbr. Now then, my fellows,

No more ; but to our unsuspected homes.
 Good night to all who rest ; hope to the watchful.
 Stranger, with me (*to Mario*).

[*Exeunt · manet DUKE.*]

Duke. I'm old and desolate. O were I dead
 With thee, my wife ! Oft have I lain by night
 Upon thy grave, and burned with the mad wish
 To raise thee up to life. Thank God, whom then
 I might have thought not pitiful, for lending
 No ear to such a prayer. Far better were I
 Thy grave-fellow, than thou alive with me,
 Amid the fears and perils of the time.

Enter ZIBA

Who's in the dark there ?

Ziba. One of the dark's colour :
Ziba, thy slave.

Duke. Come at a wish, my Arab.
 Is Thorwald's house asleep yet ?

Ziba. No : his lights still burn.

Duke. Go ; fetch a lantern and some working
 fellows

With spade and pickaxe. Let not Thorwald come.

In good speed do it. [*Exit ZIBA.*]

That alone is left me :

I will abandon this ungrateful country,
 And leave my dukedom's earth behind me ; all,
 Save the small urn that holds my dead beloved .
 That relic will I save from my wrecked princedom ;
 Beside it live and die.

Enter THORWALD, ZIBA, and gravediggers

Old friend, I hope stains Thorwald with them !
 'Tis a late walking you were in pleasant sleep :
 your.

Thorw. I came to learn
Whether the slave spoke true. This haunted hour,
What would you with the earth? Dig you for treasure?

Duke. Aye, I do dig for treasure. To the vault,
Lift up the kneeling marble woman there,
And delve down to the coffin. Aye, for treasure:
The very dross of such a soul and body
Shall stay no longer in this land of hate
I'll covetously rake the ashes up
Of this my love-consumed incense star,
And in a golden urn, over whose sides
An unborn life of sculpture shall be poured,
They shall stand ever on my chamber altar.
I am not Heaven's rebel; think't not of me;
Nor that I'd trouble her sepulchral sleep
For a light end. Religiously I come
To change the bed of my beloved lady,
That what remains below of us may join,
Like its immortal.

Thorw. There is no ill here:
And yet this breaking through the walls, that sever
The quick and cold, led never yet to good

Ziba. Our work is done. betwixt the charmed
moonshine
And the coffin lies nought but a nettle's shade,
That shakes its head at the deed.

Duke.

Let the men go

[Exeunt labourers.]

Now Death, thou shadowy miser,
I am thy robber; be not merciful,
But take me in requital. There is she then;
I cannot hold my tears, thinking how altered.
O thoughts, ye fleeting, unsubstantial family!
Thou formless, viewless, and unuttered memory!
How dare ye yet survive that gracious image,
Sculptured about the essence whence ye rose?
That words of hers should ever dwell in me,

Who is as if she never had been born
 To all earth's millions, save this one ! Nay, prithee,
 Let no one comfort me. I'll mourn awhile
 Over her memory.

Thorw. Let the past be past,
 And Lethe freeze unwept on over it.
 What is, be patient with ; and, with what shall be,
 Silence the body-bursting spirit's yearnings.
 Thon say'st that, when she died, that day was spilt
 All beauty flesh could hold ; that day went down
 An oversouled creation. The time comes
 When thou shalt find again thy blessed love,
 Pure from all earth, and with the nsury
 Of her heaven-hoarded charms.

Duke. Is this the silence
 That I commanded ? Fool, thou say'st a lesson -
 Out of some philosophic pedant's book.
 I loved no desolate soul : she was a woman,
 Whose spirit I knew only through those limbs,
 Those tender members thou dost dare despise ;
 By whose exhaustless beauty, infinite love,
 Trackless expression only, I did learn
 That there was aught yet viewless and eternal ;
 Since they could come from such alone. Where is she ?
 Where shall I ever see her as she was ?
 With the sweet smile, she smiled only on me ;
 With those eyes full of thoughts, none else could see ?
 Where shall I meet that brow and lip with mine ?
 Hence with thy shadows ! But her warm fair body,
 Where's that ? There, mouldered to the dust. Old man
 If thou dost dare to mock my ears again
 With thy ridiculous, ghostly consolation,
 I'll send thee to the blessings thou dost speak of.

Thorw. For Heaven's and her sake restrain this
 passion.

Duke. She died. But Death is old and half worn out :
 Are there no chinks in't ? Could she not come to me ?

Ghosts have been seen ; but never in a dream,
 After she'd sighed her last was she the blessing
 Of these desiring eyes All, save my soul,
 And that but for her sake, were his who knew
 The spell of Endor and could raise her up.

Thorw. Another time that thought were impious.
 Unreasonable longings, such as these
 Fit not your age and reason. In sorrow's rage
 Thou dost demand the life of an old man
 Which children should not touch the tide.

Ziba. Smile ignorance !
 But sure as men have died strong necromancy
 Hath set the clock of time and nature back ;
 And made Earth's rooty, ruinous, grave-floored caverns
 Throb with the pangs of birth. Ave were I ever
 Where the accused innocent did pray
 Acquittal from dead lips, I would essay
 My sires' sepulchral magic.

Duke. Slave, thou tempt'st me
 To lay my sword's point to thy throat, and say
 ' Do it or I thyself !'

Thorw. If thou com'st in
 To cherish hopes like these is other foolishness
 Or a sure cause of it. Come in and sleep
 To-morrow we'll talk further.

Duke. Go in thou.
 Sleep blinds no eyes of mine, till I have proved
 This slave's temptation.

Thorw. Then I leave you to him.
 Good-night again. [*Exit Thorwald.*]

Duke. Good-night, and quiet slumbers.
 Now then thou juggling African thou shadow,
 Think'st thou I will not murder thee this night,
 If thou again dare tantalize my soul
 With thy accursed hints, thy lying boasts ?
 Say, shall I stab thee ?

Ziba. Then thou murder'st truth.

I spoke of what I'd do.

Duke. You told ghost-lies,
And held me for a fool because I wept.
Now, once more, silence : or to-night I shed
Drops royaller and redder than those tears.

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED

Isbr. Pilgrim, not yet abed ? Why, ere you've time
To lay your cloak down, heaven will strip off night,
And show her daily bosom.

Duke. Sir, my eyes
Never did feel less appetite for sleep :
I and my slave intend to watch till morrow.

Isbr. Excellent. You're a fellow of my humour.
I never sleep o' nights ; the black sky likes me,
And the soul's solitude, while half mankind
Lie quiet in earth's shade and rehearse death.
Come, let's be merry : I have sent for wine,
And here it comes. *[It is brought in.*

These mossy stones about us
Will serve for stools, although they have been turrets
Which scarce aught touched but sunlight, or the claw
Of the strong-winged eagles, who lived here
And fed on battle-bones. Come sit, sir stranger ;
Sit too, my devil-coloured one ; here's room
Upon my rock. Fill, Siegfried.

Siegfr. Yellow wine,
And rich be sure. How like you it ?

Duke. Better ne'er wetted lip.

Isbr. Then fill again. Come, hast no song to-night,
Siegfried ? Nor you, my midnight of a man ?
I'm weary of dumb toping.

Siegfr. Yet you sing not.
My songs are staler than the cuckoo's tune :
And you, companions ?

Duke. We are quite unused.

Isbr. Then you shall have a ballad of my making.

Siegfr. How ? do you rhyme too ?

Isbr. Sometimes, in rainy weather.

Here's what I made one night, while picking poisons
To make the rats a salad.

Duke. And what's your tune ?

Isbr. What is the night-bird's tune, wherewith she
startles

The bee out of his dream that turns and kisses

The inmost of his power that starts again ?

What is the lobster's tune when he is boiling ?

I hate your lumps that are made to come

Round like a squirrel's cage, and round again.

We nightingales sing boldly from our hearts :

So listen to us.

Song by ISBRAND

Squats on a toad-stool under a tree

A bodiless childfull of life in the gloom,

Crying with frog voice, ' What shall I be ?

Poor unborn ghost for my mother killed me

Scarcely alive in her wicked womb

What shall I be ? shall I creep to the egg

That's cracking asunder yonder by Nile,

And with eighteen toes,

And a snuff-taking nose,

Make an Egyptian crocodile ?

Sing, " Catch a mummy by the leg

And crunch him with an upper jaw,

Wagging tail and clenching claw ;

Take a bill-full from my craw,

Neighbour raven, caw, O caw,

Grunt, my crocky, pretty maw ! "

' Swine, shall I be you ? Thou'rt a dear dog ;

But for a smile, and kiss, and pout,

I much prefer your black-lipped snout,

Little, gruntless, fairy hog,

Godson of the hawthorn hedge,
For, when Ringwood snuffs me out,
And 'gins my tender paunch to grapple,
Sing, " 'Twixt your ancles visage wedge,
And roll up like an apple."

'Serpent Lucifer, how do you do ?
Of your worms and your snakes I'd be one or two ;
For in this dear planet of wool and of leather
'Tis pleasant to need neither shirt, sleeve, nor shoe,
And have arm, leg, and belly together.
Then aches your head, or are you lazy ?
Sing, " Round your neck your belly wrap,
Tail-a-top, and make your cap
Any bee and daisy."

'I'll not be a fool, like the nightingale
Who sits up all midnight without any ale,
Making a noise with his nose ;
Nor a camel, although 'tis a beautiful back ;
Nor a duck, notwithstanding the music of quack,
And the webby, mud-patting toes.
I'll be a new bird with the head of an ass,
Two pigs' feet, two mens' feet, and two of a hen ;
Devil-winged ; dragon-bellied ; grave-jawed, because
grass
Is a beard that's soon shaved, and grows seldom
again
Before it is summer, so cove all the rest,
The new Dodo is finished. O' come to my nest.'

Siegfr. A noble hymn to the belly gods indeed :
Would that Pythagoras had heard thee, boy !

Isbr. I fear you flatter : 'tis perhaps a little
Too sweet and tender, but that is the fashion ;
Besides my failing is too much sentiment.
Fill the cups up, and pass them round again ;

Duke. He who dares think that words of human speech,

A chalky ring with monstrous figures in it,
Or smoky flames can draw the distant souls
Of those, whose bones and monuments are dust,
Must shudder at the restless, broken death
Which he himself in age shall fall into.

Isbr. Suppose we four had lived in Cyrus' time,
And had our graves under Egyptian grass,
D'you think, at whistling of a necromant,
I'd leave my wine or subterranean love
To know his bidding ? Mummies cannot pull
The breathing to them, when they'd learn the news

Ziba. Perhaps they do, in sleep, in swoons, in fevers :
But your belief's not needed.

(*To the Duke*) You remember
The damsel dark at Mecca, whom we saw
Weeping the death of a pale summer flower,
Which her spear-slain beloved had tossed to her
Galloping into battle ?

Duke. Happy one !

Whose eyes could yield a tear to soothe her sorrows.
But what's that to the point ?

Ziba.

As those tears fell,

A magic scholar passed ; and, their cause known,
Bade her no longer mourn : he called a bird,

And bade it with its bill select a grain

Out of the gloomy deathbed of the blossom.

The feathery bee obeyed ; and scraped aside

The sand, and dropped the seed into its grave :

And there the old plant lay, still and forgotten,

By its just budding grandsons ; but not long :

For soon the floral necromant brought forth

A wheel of amber (such may *Clotho* use

When she spins lives), and, as he turned and sung,

The mould was cracked and shouldered up : there came

A curved stalk, and then two leaves unfurled.

And slow and straight between them there arose,
 Ghostly still, again the crowned flower
 Is it not easier to raise a man,
 Whose soul strives upward ever, than a plant,
 Whose very life stands halfway on death's road,
 Asleep and buried half?

Duke This was a cheat
 The herb was born anew out of a seed,
 Not raised out of a bony skeleton
 What tree is man the seed of?

Ziba Of a ghost,
 Of his night-coming tempest-waved phantom:
 And even as there is a round dry grain
 In a plant's skeleton, which being buried
 Can raise the herb's green body up again;
 So is there such in man, a seed-shaped bone,
 Aldabaron, called by the Hebrews Luz,
 Which, being laid into the ground, will bear
 After three thousand years the grass of flesh,
 The bloody soul-possessed weed called man.

Isbr Let's have a trick then in all haste, I prithee.
 The world's man-crammed; we want no more of them;
 But show me, if you will, some four-legged ghost;
 Rome's mother, the she-wolf, or the fat goat
 From whose dugs Jove sucked godhead; any thing;
 Pig, bullock, goose; for they have goblins too,
 Else ours would have no dinner.

Ziba Were you worthy,
 I'd raise a spirit whom your conscience knows;
 And he would drag thee down into that world,
 Whither thou didst send him

Isbr Thanks for the offer.
 Our wine's out, and these clouds, whose blackest wombs
 Seem swelling with a second centaur-birth,
 Threaten plain water So good-night

[Exit with SIEGFRIED.]

Duke. Obstinate slave! Now that we are alone,

Durst thou again say life and soul has lifted
The dead man from the grave, and sent him walking
Over the earth ?

Ziba. I say it, and will add
Deed to my word, not oath Within what tomb
Dwells he, whom you would call ?

Duke. There. But stand off !
If you do juggle with her holy bones,
By God I'll murder thee. I don't believe you,
For here next to my heart I wear a bond,
Written in the blood of one who was my friend,
In which he swears that, dying first, he would
Borrow some night his body from the ground,
To visit me once more. One day we quarrelled,
Swords hung beside us and we drew : he fell.
Yet never has his bond or his revenge
Raised him to my bedside, haunting his murderer,
Or keeping blood-sealed promise to his friend.
Does not this prove you he ?

Ziba. 'Tis not my spell :
Shall I try that with him ?

Duke. No, no ! not him.
The heavy world press on him, where he lies,
With all her towers and mountains !

Ziba. Listen, lord.
Time was when Death was young and pitiful,
Though callous now by use : and then there dwelt,
In the thin world above, a beauteous Arab,
Unmated yet and boyish. To his couch
At night, which shone so starry through the boughs,
A pale flower-breathed nymph with dewy hair
Would often come, but all her love was silent ;
And ne'er by daylight could he gaze upon her,
For ray by ray, as morning came, she paled,
And like a snow of air dissolv'd i' th' light,
Leaving behind a stalk with lilies hung,
Round which her womanish graces had assembled.

So did the early love-time of his youth
 Pass with delight—but when, compelled at length,
 He left the wilds and woods for riotous camps
 And cities full of men, he saw no more.
 Tho' prayed and wept for, his old bed-time vision,
 The pale dissolving maiden. He would wander
 Sleepless about the waste, benighted felds
 Asking the speechless shades as they went by
 'Who shared my company? Who was my love? Where
 is she?'

Thus passing through a grassy burial-ground,
 Wherein a new-dug grave gaped wide for food,
 'Who was she?' cried he—and the earthy month
 Did move its nettle-bearded lips together,
 And said 'Twas I—I, Death—behold our child!'
 The wanderer looked, and on the lap of the pit
 A young child slept as at a mother's breast.
 He raised it and he reared it. From that infant
 My race, the death-begotten, draw their blood:
 Our prayer for the diseased works more than medicine;
 Our blessings oft secure grey hairs and happy
 To new-born infants—and in case of need,
 The dead and gone are re-begotten by us,
 And motherlessly born to second life.

Duke. I've heard your tale. Now exorcise: but
 mark!

If thou dost dare to make my heart thy fool,
 I'll send thee to thy grave-mouthed grandam, Arab.

Ziba. Wilt thou submit unmurmuring to all evils,
 Which this recall to a forgotten being
 May cause to thee and thine?

Duke. With all my soul,
 So I may take the good.

Ziba. And art thou ready
 To follow, if so be its will, the ghost,
 Whom you will re-embodify, to the place
 Which it doth now inhabit?

Duke. My first wish.
Now to your sorcery : and no more conditions,
In hopes I may break off. All ill be mine,
Which shall the world revisit with the being
That lies within.

Ziba. Enough. Upon this scroll
Are written words, which read, even in a whisper,
Would in the air create another star ;
And, more than thunder-tongued storms in the sky,
Make the old world to quake and sweat with fear ;
And, as the chilly damps of her death-swoon
Fall and condense, they to the moon reflect
The forms and colours of the pale old dead.
Laid there among the bones, and left to burn
With sacred spices, its keen vaporous power
Would draw to life the earliest dead of all,
Swift as the sun doth ravish a dewdrop
Out of a flower. But see, the torch-flame dies :
How shall I light it ?

Duke. Here's my useless blood-bond
These words, that should have waked illumination
Within a corpse's eyes, will make a tinder,
Whose sparks might be of life instead of fire.
Burn it.

Ziba. An incense for thy senses, god of those,
To whom life is as death to us ; who were,
Ere our grey ancestors wrote history ;
When these our ruined towers were in the rock ;
And our great forests, which do feed the sea
With storm-souled fleets, lay in an acorn's cup :
When all was seed that now is dust ; our minute
Invisibly far future. Send thy spirit
From plant of the air, and from the air and earth,
And from earth's worms, and roots, again to gather
The dispersed being, 'mid whose bones I place
The words which, spoken, shall destroy death's kingdom,
And which no voice, but thunder, can pronounce.

Marrow fill bone, and vine-like veins run round them,
 And flesh, thou grass, mown wert thou long ago—
 Now comes the brown dry after-crop. Ho! ghost!
 There's thy old heart a-beating, and thy life
 Burning on the old hearth. Come home again!

Duke. Hush! Do you hear a noise?

Ziba.

It is the sound

Of the ghost's foot on Jacob's ladder-rungs

Duke. More like the tread upon damp stony steps
 Out of a dungeon—Dost thou hear a door
 Drop its great bolt and grate upon its hinges?

Ziba. Serpentine Hell! That is thy staircase echo,
 (*Aside*) And thy jaws' groaning. What betides it?

Duke. Thou human murder-time of night,
 What hast thou done?

Ziba. My task: give me to death, if the air has
 not

What was the earth's but now. Ho there! i' th' vault.

A Voice. Who breaks my death?

Ziba. Draw on thy body take up thy old limbs,
 And then come forth tomb-born

Duke.

One moment's peace!

Let me remember what a grace she had,
 Even in her dying hour her soul set not,
 But at its noon Death like a cloud came o'er it,
 And now hath passed away. O come to me,
 Thou dear returned spirit of my wife;
 And, surely as I clasp thee once again,
 Thou shalt not die without me.

Ziba.

Ho! there, Grave,

Is life within thee?

The Voice.

Melveric, I am here.

Duke. Did'st hear that whisper? Open, and let in
 The blessing to my eyes, whose subtle breath
 Doth penetrate my heart's quick; and let me hear
 That dearest name out of those dearest lips.
 Who comes back to my heart?

MANDRAKE *runs out of the sepulchre*

Ziba. Momus of Hell, what's this ?

Duke. Is this thy wretched jest, thou villanous fool ?
Bnt I will punish thee, by heaven ; and thou too

[*To MANDRAKE,*

Shalt soon be what thou shouldst have better acted.

Mandr. Excuse me : as you have thought proper to call me to the living, I shall take the liberty of remaining alive. If you want to speak to another ghost, of longer standing, look into the old lumber-room of a vault again ; some one seems to be putting himself together there. Good-night, gentlemen, for I must travel to Egypt once more. [*Exit.*

Duke. Thou disappointed cheat ! Was this a fellow, Whom thou hadst hired to act a spectral part ?
Thou see'st how well he does it But away !
Or I will teach thee better to rehearse it

Ziba. Death is a hypocrite then, a white dissembler,
Like all that doth seem good ! I am put to shame.

[*Exit.*

Duke. Deceived and disappointed vain desires !
Why laugh I not, and ridicule myself ?
'Tis still, and cold, and nothing in the air
But an old grey twilight, or of eve or morn
I know not which, dim as futurity,
And sad and hoary as the ghostly past,
Fills up the space. Hush ! not a wind is there,
Not a cloud sails over the battlements,
Not a bell tolls the hour. Is there an hour ?
Or is not all gone by, which here did live,
Of men and their life's ways ? Could I but hear
The ticking of a clock, or some one breathing,
Or e'en a cricket's chirping, or the grating
Of the old gates amidst the marble tombs,
I should be sure that this was still the world.
Hark ! Hark ! Doth nothing stir ?

No light, and still no light besides this ghost
That mocks the dawn, unaltered - Still no sound ?
No voice of man ? No cry of beast ? No rustle
Of any moving creature ? And sure I feel
That I remain the same, no more round blood-drops
Roll joyously along my pulseless veins
The air I seem to breathe is still the same
And the great dreadful thing that now comes o'er
me

Must remain . . .
This moment with thee, O Wolfram !
Eternity hath no discoloured tinge
And I alone am left of all that lived
Pent in this narrow horrible conviction
Ha ! the dead soon will wake ! My Agnes rise
Rise up, my wife ! One look ere Wolfram comes,
Quick, or it is too late the murdered hasten !
My best-beloved, come once to my heart . . .
But ah ! who art thou ?

[The lids of the sepulchre fly open and discover
WOLFRAM.]

Duke. Lie of my eyes begone! Are thou not dead?
Are not the worms, that ate thy marrow, dead?
What dost thou here, thou wretched goblin fool?
Think'st thou I fear thee? Thou man-mocking air,
Thou art not truer than a mirror's image,
Nor half so lasting. Back again to coffin.
Thou baffled idiot spectre, or haunt cradles
Or stay, and I'll laugh at thee. Guard thyself,
If thou pretendest life

Wolf. Is this thin air, that thrusts thy sword away?
Flesh, bones, and soul, and blood that thou stol'st from
me,
Upon thy summons, bound by heart-red letters,
Here Wolfram stands. what wouldst thou?

Duke. What sorcery else,
But that cursed compact, could have made full Hell
Boil over, and spill thee, thou topmost damned ?
But down again ! I'll see no more of thee.
Hound to thy kennel, to your coffin bones,
Ghost to thy torture !

Wolfr. Thou returnest with me ;
So make no hurry. I will stay awhile
To see how the old world goes, feast and be merry,
And then to work again.

Duke. Darest thou stand there,
Thou shameless vapour, and assert thyself,
While I defy, and question, and deride thee ?
The stars, I see them dying : clearly all
The passage of this night remembrance gives me,
And I think coolly : but my brain is mad,
Else why behold I that ? Is't possible
Thou'rt true, and worms have vomited thee up
Upon this rind of earth ? No, thou shalt vanish.
Was it for this I hated thee and killed thee ?
I'll have thee dead again, and hounds and eagles
Shall be thy graves, since this old, earthy one
Hath spat thee out for poison.

Wolfr. Thou, old man,
Art helpless against me. I shall not harm thee ;
So lead me home. I am not used to sunlight,
And morn's a-breaking.

Duke. Then there is rebellion
Against all kings, even Death. Murder's worn out
And full of holes ; I'll never make't the prison,
Of what I hate, again. Come with me, spectre ;
If thou wilt live against the body's laws,
Thou murderer of Nature, it shall be
A question, which haunts which, while thou dost last.
So come with me.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I. *An apartment in the Governor's palace**The DUKE and an attendant**Duke.* Your lord sleeps yet?*Attendant.* An hour ago he rose.
About this time he's busy with his falcons,
And then he takes his meal.*Duke.* I'll wait for him.*[Exit attendant.]*

How strange it is that I can live to-day,
 Nay look like other men, who have been sleeping
 On quiet pillows and not dreamt! Methinks
 The look of the world's a hell, a face made up
 O'er graves and heavy depths, and nothing's true
 But what's a lie. I have been told
 The perils of the world are like a sea
 Each day he walks a mile, and every step
 Which fall behind and graze him. He perceives
 Then would he know that life's a single pilgrim,
 Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers.
 It is this infinite invisible
 Which we must learn to know, and yet to scorn,
 And, from the scorn of that, regard the world
 As from the edge of a far star. Now then
 I feel me in the thickest of the battle;
 The arrow-shower pours down, swords hew, mines
 open
 Their ravenous mouths about me; it rains death
 But cheerly I defy the braggart storm,
 And set my back against a rock, to fight
 Till I am bloodily won.

Enter THORWALD

Thorw. How ? here already ?
I'm glad on't, and to see you look so clear
After that idle talk. How did it end ?

Duke. Scarcely as I expected

Thorw. Dared he conjure ?
But surely you have seen no ghost last night :
You seem to have supped well and slept.

Duke. We'd wine,
And some wild singing. Of the necromancy
We'll speak no more. Ha ! Do you see a shadow ?

Thorw. Aye : and the man who casts it.

Duke. 'Tis true ; my eyes are dim and dull with
watching.
This castle that fell down, and was rebuilt
With the same stones, is the old castle still ;
And so with him.

Enter WOLFRAM

Thorw. What mean you ?

Duke. Impudent goblin !
Darest thou the daylight ? Dar'st be seen of more
Than me, the guilty ? Vanish ! Though thou'rt there,
I'll not believe I see thee. Or is this
The work of necromantic Conscience ? Ha !
'Tis nothing but a picture. Distant it
Strange visions my good Thorwald are begotten,
When Sleep o'ershadows waking.

Thorw. Who's the stranger ?
You speak as one familiar.

Duke. Is aught here
Besides ourselves ? I think not.

Thorw. Yet you gaze
Straight on the man.

Duke. A villanous friend of mine ;
Of whom I must speak well, and still permit him

To follow me. So thou'rt yet visible,
Thou grave-breaker ! If thou wilt haunt me thus,
I'll make thee my fool, ghost, my jest and zany.
'Tis his officious gratitude that pains me :
The carcase owes to me its ruinous life
(Between whose broken walls and hideous arches
You see the other world's grey spectral light) ;
Therefore he clings to me so ivily
Now, goblin, lie about it 'Tis in truth
A faithful slave.

Voltr If I had come unsummoned,
If I had burst into your sunny world,
And stolen visibility and birth
Against thy prayers, thus shouldst thou speak to
me :

But thou hast forced me up, remember that.
I am no fiend, no foe ; then let me hear
These stern and tyrannous rebukes no more.
Wilt thou be with the born, that have not died ?
I vanish now a short farewell I fade ;
The air doth melt me and, my form being gone,
I'm all thou see'st not. [*He disappears.*]

Duke. Dissolved like snow in water ! Be my cloud,
My breath, and fellow soul, I can bear all,
As long as thou art viewless to these others.
Now there are two of us. How stands the bridal ?

Thorw. This evening 'twill be held.

Duke. Good ; and our plot
Leaps on your pleasure's lap ; here comes my gang ;
Away with you. [*Exit THORWALD.*]

I do begin to feel
As if I were a ghost among the men,
As all, whom I loved, are ; for their affections
Hang on things new, young, and unknown to me :
And that I am is but the obstinate will
Of this my hostile body.

I shall lie trembling. Pilgrim, plead for me
With a tongue love-oiled.

Duke. Win her, sir, and wear her.
But you and she are scarcely for one world.

Isb. Enough ; I'll wed her. Siegfried, come with
me ;

We'll talk about it in the rainy weather

Pilgrim, anon I find you in the ruins

Where we had wine last night

(Exit with SIEGFRIED.)

Adalm. Would that it all were over, and well over !
Suspensions dash upon me here and there
But we're in the mid ocean without compass,
Winds wild, and billows rolling us away :
Onwards with hope !

Duke. Of what ? Youth is it possible
That thou art toiling here for liberty,
And others' welfare, and such virtuous shadows
As philosophic fools and beggars raise
Out of the world that's gone ? Thou'lt sell thy birth-
right

For incense praise, less tickling to the sense
Than Esau's pottage steam ?

Adalm. No, not for these,
Fame's breath and praise, its shadow. 'Tis my humour
To do what's right and good.

Duke. Thou'rt a strange prince.
Why all the world, except some fifty lean ones,
Would, in your place and at your ardent years,
Seek the delight that lies in woman's limbs
And mountain-covering grapes What's to be royal,
Unless you pick those girls, whose cheeks you fancy,
As one would cowslips ? And see hills and valleys
Mantled in autumn with the snaky plant,
Whose juice is the right madness, the best godship ?
Have men, and beasts, and woods, with flower and fruit
From all the earth, one's slaves ; bid the worm eat

This pilgrim's shape will hang about and guard thee,
Being but the shadow of my sunniness,
Looking in patience through a cloudy time. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II. A garden

SIBYL AND ATHULF

Athulf From me no comfort O you specious
creatures

So poisonous to the eye ! Go ! you sow madness :
And one of you, although I cannot curse her,
Will make my grave a murderer's I'll do nought ;
But rather drink and revel at your bridal
And why not Isbrand ? Many such a serpent
Doth lick heaven's dew out of as sweet a flower.
Wed, wed ! I'll not prevent it.

Sibyl. I beseech thee,
If there be any tie of love between thee
And her who is thy brother's

Athulf Curse the word !
And trebly curse the deed that made us brothers !
O that I had been born the man I hate !
Any, at least, but one. Then—sleep my soul ;
And walk not in thy sleep to do the act,
Which thou must ever dream of. My fair lady,
I would not be the reason of one tear
Upon thy bosom, if the times were other ;
If women were not women. When the world
Turns round the other way, and doing Cain-like
Passes as merrily as doing Eve-like,
Then I'll be pitiful Let go my hand ;
It is a mischievous limb, and may run wild,
Doing the thing its master would not. *[Exit.]*

Sibyl. Then no one hears me. O ! the world's too
loud,

With trade and battle, for my feeble cry
 To rouse the living. The invisible
 Hears best what is unspoken ; and my thoughts
 Have long been calling comfort from the grave.

WOLFRAM *suddenly appears, in the garment of a monk*

Wolfr. Lady, you called me.

Sibyl.

I ?

Wolfr.

The word was *Comfort* :

A name by which the master, whose I am,
 Is named by many wise and many wretched.
 Will you with me to the place where sighs are not ;
 A shore of blessing, which disease doth beat and
 Sea-like, and dashes those whom he would wreck
 Into the arms of Peace ? But ah ! what say I ?
 You're young and must be merry in the world,
 Have friends to envy, lovers to betray you,
 And feed young children with the blood of your heart,
 Till they have sucked up strength enough to break it.
 Poor woman ! Art thou nothing but the straw
 Bearing a heavy poison, and, that shed,
 Cut down to be stamped on ? But thou'rt i' th' blade ;
 The green and milky sun-deceived grass :
 So stand till the scythe comes, take shine and shower,
 And the wind fell you gently.

Sibyl.

Do not go.

Speak as at first you did ; there was in the words
 A mystery and music, which did thaw
 The hard old rocky world into a flood,
 Whereon a swan-drawn boat seemed at my feet
 Rocking on its blue billows ; and I heard
 Harmonies, and breathed odours from an isle,
 Whose flowers cast tremulous shadows in the day
 Of an immortal sun, and crowd the banks
 Whereon immortal human kind doth couch.
 This I have dreamt before : your speech recalled it.
 So speak to soothe me once again.

Wolfr.

(Aside) Snake Death.

Sweet as the cowslip's honey is thy whisper
O let this dove escape thee ! I'll not plead,
I will not be thy suitor to this innocent :
Open thy craggy jaws ; speak, coffin-tongued,
Persuasions through the dancing of the yew-bough
And the crow's nest upon it *(Aloud)* Lady fair,
Listen not to me look not on me more
I have a fascination in my words
A magnet in my look which drags you downwards,
From hope and life You set your eyes upon me,
And think I stand upon this earth beside you ;
Alas ! I am upon a jutting stone,
Which crumbles down the steeps of an abyss ;
And you, above me far, grow wild and giddy
Leave me, or you must fall into the deep

Sibyl. I leave thee never, nor thou me O no !
You know not what a heart you spurn away ;
How good it might be, if love cherished it ;
And how deserted 'tis ; ah so deserted,
That I have often wished a ghost would come,
Whose love might haunt it Turn not thou, the last.
Thou see'st I'm young ; how happy might I be !
And yet I only wish these tears I shed
Were raining on my grave. If thou'lt not love me,
Then do me the next office ; show me only
The shortest path to solitary death.

Wolfr. You're moved to wildness, maiden. Beg not
of me.

I can grant nothing good : quiet thyself,
And seek heaven's help Farewell

Sibyl.

Wilt thou leave me ?

Unpitying, aye unmoved in cheek and heart,
Stern, selfish mortal ? Hast thou heard my prayer ;
Hast seen me weep ; hast seen my limbs to quiver,
Like a storm-shaken tree over its roots ?
Art thou alive, and canst thou see this wretch,

Without a care ?

Wolfr. Thou see'st I am unmoved :
Infer the truth.

Sibyl. Thy soul indeed is dead.

Wolfr. My soul, my soul ! O that it wore not now
The semblance of a garb it hath cast off ;
O that it was disrobed of these mock limbs,
Shed by a rocky birth unnaturally,
Long after their decease and burial !
O woe that I must speak ! for she, who hears,
Is marked for no more breathing. There are histories
Of women, nature's bounties, who disdained
The mortal love of the embodied man,
And sought the solitude which spirits east
Around their darksome presenee. These have loved,
Wooed, wedded, and brought home their moonstruck
brides
Unto the world-sanded eternity.
Hast faith in such reports ?

Sibyl. So lonely am I,
That I dare wish to prove them true.

Wolfr. Dar'st die ?
A grave-deep question. Answer it religiously,

Sibyl. With him I loved, I dared.

Wolfr. With me and for me.
I am a ghost. Tremble not ; fear not me.
The dead are ever good and innocent,
And love the living They are cheerful creatures,
And quiet as the sunbeams, and most like,
In grace and patient love and spotless beauty,
The new-born of mankind. 'Tis better too
To die, as thou art, young, in the first grace
And full of beauty, and so be remembered
As one chosen from the earth to be an angel ;
Not left to droop and wither, and be borne
Down by the breath of time. Come then, Sibylla,
For I am Wolfram !

Sibyl.

Thou art come to fetch me!

It is indeed a proof of boundless love,
That thou hadst need of me even in thy bliss.
I go with thee. O Death! I am thy friend,
I struggle not with thee, I love thy state:
Thou canst be sweet and gentle, be so now;
And let me pass praying away into thee,
As twilight still does into starry night

*{The scene closes.**Voices in the air*

As sudden thunder
Pierces night,
As magic wonder,
Wild affright,
Rives asunder
Men's delight:
Our ghost, our corpse; and we
Rise to be.

As does the lizard
Serpent tell,
As goblin vizard,
At the spell
Of the wizard,
Sinks to hell:
Our life, our laugh, our lay
Pass away.

As wake the morning
Trumpets bright,
As snowdrop, scorning
Winter's might,
Rises warning
Like a spright:
We buried, dead, and slain
Rise again.

SCENE III

A garden, under the windows of AMALA'S apartment

ATHULF

Athulf. Once more I'll see thee, love, speak to thee,
hear thee ;

And then my soul shall cut itself a door
Out of this planet. I've been wild and heartless,
Laughed at the feasts where Love had never place,
And pledged my light faith to a hundred women,
Forgotten all next day. A worthless life,
A life ridiculous ! Day after day,
Folly on folly ! But I'll not repent
Remorse and weeping shall not be my virtues .
Let fools do both and, having had their evil,
And tickled their young hearts with the sweet sins
That feather Cupid's shafts, turn timid, weep,
Be penitent. Now the wild banquet's o'er,
Wine spilt, lights out, I cannot brook the world,
It is so silent. And that poisonous reptile,
My past self, is a villain I'll not pardon.
I hate and will have vengeance on my soul :
Satirical Murder, help me . . . Ha ' I am
Devil-inspired : out with you, ye fool's thoughts !
You're young, strong, healthy yet ; years may you live :
Why yield to an ill-humoured moment ? No '
I'll cut his throat across, make her my wife ,
Huzza ! for a mad life ! and be a Duke !
I was born for sin and love it.

O thou villain,
Die, die ! Have patience with me, heavenly Mercy !
Let me but once more look upon that blessing,
Then can I calmly offer up to thee
This crime-haired head.

Enter AMALA as bride, with a bridesmaid

O beauty, beauty !

Thou shed'st a moony night of quiet through me.
Thanks I now I am resolved.

Bridesm.

Amala, good-night :

Thou'rt happy. In these high delightful times,
It does the human heart much good to think
On deepest woe which may be waiting for us
Masked even in a marriage-hour.

Amala

Thou'rt timid .

'Tis well to trust in the good genius
Are not our hearts in these great pleasures godded,
Let out awhile to their eternity,
And made prophetic ? The past is pale to me ;
But I do see my future plain of life,
Full of rejoicings and of harvest-dances,
Clearly, it is so sunny. A year hence
I'll laugh at you for this, until you weep.
Good-night, sweet fear.

Bridesm

Take this flower from me

(A white rose fitting for a wedding-gift),
And lay it on your pillow—Pray to live
So fair and innocently, pray to die,
Leaf after leaf, so softly.

[*Exit.*

Amala.—Now to my chamber ; yet an hour or two,
In which years must be sown.

Athulf.

Stay, Amala ;

An old acquaintance brings a greeting to you,
Upon your wedding night.

Amala. His brother Athulf ! What can he do here ?
I fear the man

Athulf.

Dost love him ?

Amala

That werc cause

Indeed to fear him. Leave me, leave me, sir ;
It is too late. We cannot be together
For any good.

Athulf. This once we can. O Amala,
Had I been in my young days taught the truth,
And brought up with the kindness and affection
Of a good man ! I was not myself evil,
But out of youth and ignorance did much wrong.
Had I received lessons in thought and nature,
We might have been together, but not thus.
How then ? Did you not love me long ago ?
More, O much more than him ? Yes, Amala,
You would have been mine now. A life with thee,
Heavenly delight and virtue ever with us !
I've lost it, trod on it, and crush'd it. Woe !
O bitter woe is me !

Amala. Athulf, why make me
Rue the inevitable ? Prithee leave me.

Athulf. Thee bye and bye : and all that is not thee.
Thee, my all, that I've forfeited I'll leave,
And the world's all, my nothing

Amala. Nay ; despond not.
Thou'lt be a merry, happy man some day,
And list to this as to a tale of some one
You had forgotten.

Athulf. Now no need of comfort :
I'm somehow glad that it did thus fall out.
Then had I lived too softly ; in these woes
I can stand up, and show myself a man.
I do not think that I shall live an hour.
Wilt pardon me for that my earlier deeds
Have caused to thee of sorrow ? Amala.
Pity me, pardon me, bless me in this hour ;
In this my death, in this your bridal, hour.
Pity me, sweet.

Amala. Both thee and me : no more !

Athulf. Forgive !

Amala. With all my soul. God bless thee, my dear

Athulf.

Athulf. Kiss I thy hand ? O much more fervently

Now, in my grief, than heretofore in love.
Farewell, go ; look not back again upon me.
In silence go.

[*Exit Amala.*]

She having left my eyes,
There's nothing in the world, to look on which
I'd live a moment longer. Therefore come,
Thou sacrament of death : Eternity,
I pledge thee thus.

[*He drinks from a vial.*]

How cold and sweet ! It seems
As if the earth already began, shaking,
To sink beneath me O ye dead, come near ;
Why see I you not yet ? Come, crowd about me ;
Under the arch of this triumphal hour,
Welcome me ; I am one of you, and one
That, out of love for you, have forced the doors
Of the stale world.

Enter ADALMAR

Adalm. I'm wearied to the core : where's Amala ?
Ha ! Near her chambers ! Who ?

Athulf. Ask that to-morrow
Of the marble, Adalmar Come hither to me,
We must be friends I'm dying.

Adalm.

How ?

Athulf.

The cup,

I've drank myself immortal.

Adalm.

You are poisoned ?

Athulf. I am blessed, Adalmar. I've done't myself.
'Tis nearly passed, for I begin to hear
Strange but sweet sounds, and the loud rocky dashing
Of waves, where time into Eternity
Falls over ruined worlds. The wind is fair,
The boat is in the bay,
And the fair mermaid pilot calls away

Adalm. Self poisoned ?

Athulf.

Aye : a philosophic deed.

Go and be happy.

Adalm. God ! What hast thou done ?

Athulf. Justice upon myself.

Adalm. No. Thou hast stolen
The right of the deserving good old man
To rest, his cheerful labour being done.
Thou hast been wicked ; caused much misery ;
Dishonoured maidens ; broken fathers' hearts ;
Maddened some ; made others wicked as thyself ;
And darest thou die, leaving a world behind thee
That groans of thee to heaven ?

Athulf. If I thought so —
Terrible would it be : then I've both killed
And damned myself. There's justice !

Adalm. Thou should'st have lived ;
Devoting every minute to the work
Of useful, penitent amendment : then,
After long years, you might have knelt to Fate,
And ta'en her blow not fearing. Wretch, thou diest not,
But goest living into hell.

Athulf. It is too true ;
I am deserted by those turbulent joys.
The fiend hath made me death-drunk. Here I'll lie,
And die most wretchedly, accursed, unpitied
Of all, most hated by myself. O God,
If thou could'st but repeal this fatal hour,
And let me live, how day and night I'd toil
For all things to atone ! Must I wish vainly ?
My brother, is there any way to live ?

Adalm. For thee, alas ! in this world there is none.
Think not upon't.

Athulf. Thou liest : there must be :
Thou know'st it, and dost keep it secret from me,
Letting me die for hate and jealousy.
O that I had not been so pious a fool,
But killed thee, 'stead of me, and had thy wife !
I should be at the banquet, drinking to her,
Kissing her lip, in her eye smiling. . .

Peace !

Thou see'st I'm growing mad : now leave me here,
Accursed as I am, alone to die.

Adalm. Wretched, yet not despised, farewell my
brother.

Athulf. O Arab, Arab ! Thou dost sell true drugs.
Brother, my soul is very weary now
Speak comfortably to me

Adalm. From the Arab
From Ziba hadst thou poison :

Athulf. Aye 'Twas good :
An honest villain is he.

Adalm. Hold, sweet brother,
A little longer hold in hope on life,
But a few minutes more. I seek the sorcerer.
And he shall cure thee with some wondrous drug.
He can, and shall perform it : rest thou quiet.
Hope or revenge I'll bring thee. [Exit.

Athulf. Dare I hope ?
O no methinks it is not so unlovely,
This calm unconscious state this breathless peace,
Which all but troublesome and riotous man,
Assume without resistance Here I'll lay me,
And let life fall from off me tranquilly.

*Enter singers and musicians led by SIEGFRIED ; they
play under the windows of AMALA'S apartment, and
sing*

Song

By female voices

We have bathed, where none have seen us,
In the lake and in the fountain,
Underneath the charmed statue
Of the timid, bending Venus,
When the water-nymphs were countin
In the waves the stars of night,

And those maidens started at you,
 Your limbs shone through so soft and bright.
 But no secrets dare we tell,
 For thy slaves unlace thee,
 And he, who shall embrace thee,
 Wants to try thy beauty's spell.

By male voices

We have crowned thee queen of women,
 Since love's love, the rose, hath kept her
 Court within thy lips and blushes,
 And thine eye, in beauty swimming,
 Kissing, we rendered up the sceptre,
 At whose touch the startled soul
 Like an ocean bounds and gushes,
 And spirits bend at thy control
 But no secrets dare we tell
 For thy slaves unlace thee,
 And he, who shall embrace thee,
 Is at hand, and so farewell.

Athulf. Shame on you! Do you sing their _bridal
 song

Ere I have closed mine eyes? Who's there among you
 That dare to be enamoured of a maid
 So far above you, ye poor rhyming knaves?
 Ha! there begins another.

Song by SIEGFRIED

Lady, was it fair of thee
 To seem so passing fair to me?
 Not every star to every eye
 Is fair; and why
 Art thou another's share?
 Did thine eyes shed brighter glances,
 Thine un-kissed bosom heave more fair,
 To his than to my fancies?

But I'll forgive thee still ;
 Thou'rt fair without thy wil'.
 So be : but never know,
 That 'tis the hue of woe.

Lady, was it fair of thee
 To be so gentle still to me ?
 Not every lip to every eye
 Should be so kind ;
 Why dost thou near my town,
 To tempt me from my pillow
 Love's head round which Hope wove a crown,
 And saw not 'twas of willow ?
 But I'll forgive thee still
 Thou knew'st not smiles could kill
 Smile on — but never know,
 I die, nor of what woe

Athulf. Ha ! Ha ! That fellow moves my spleen .
 A disappointed and contented lover
 Methinks he should move me by his voice :
 If not, he should be wapp'd about the town,
 For vending such tame do time in love-verses
 Up to the window, carry off the bride
 And away on horseback, squeaker

Siegfr. Peace, thou bold drunken fellow that liest
 there ! —
 Leave him to sleep his folly out, good fellows.

[*Exit with musicians.*]

Athulf. Well said : I do deserve it — I lie here
 A thousand-fold fool, dying ridiculously
 Because I could not have the girl I fancied.
 Well, they are wedded, how long now will last
 Affection or content ? Besides 'twere possible
 He might have quaffed a like draught. But 'tis done :
 Villanous idiot that I am to think on't.
 She willed it so. Then, Amala, be fearless :

Wait but a little longer in thy chamber,
 And he will be with thee whom thou hast chosen :
 Or, if it make thee pastime, listen sweet one,
 And I will sing to thee, here in the moonlight,
 Thy bridal song and my own dirge in one.

He sings

A cypress-bough, and a rose-wreath sweet,
 A wedding-robe, and a winding-sheet,
 A bridal-bed and a lien.
 Thine be the kisses, maid,
 And smiling Love's alarms ;
 And thou, pale youth, be laid
 In the grave's cold arms.
 Each in his own charms,
 Death and Hymen both are here
 So up with scythe and torch,
 And to the old church porch,
 While all the bells ring clear :
 And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
 And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Now tremble dimples on your cheek
 Sweet be your lips to taste and speak
 For he who loves is near :
 By her the bridegroom's hair
 In youthful power and force ;
 By him the grizard bare
 Pale knight on a pale horse
 To woo him to a corpse.
 Death and Hymen both are here ;
 So up with scythe and torch,
 And to the old church porch,
 While all the bells ring clear :
 And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
 And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Athulf. Now we'll lie down and wait for our two summoners,
Each patiently at least

Enter AMALA

O thou kind girl,
Art thou again there? Come and lay thine hand
In mine, and speak again to soft sweet me

Amala. Thy voice is sweet. Alas! why sang'st
thou?

Athulf. I was so full of love, now I'll sing no more;
Nor speak a word to thee after this. 'Tis well
You weep not. If you had esteemed me much,
It were a horrible mistake of mine
Wilt close my eyes when I am dead sweet maid?

Amala. O Athulf, thou might'st still have lived.

Athulf. What boots it,
And thou not mine, not even loving me?
But that makes dying very sad to me.
Yet even thy pity is worth much

Amala. O no,
I pity not alone, but I love thee.
Love thee and ever will most reverently
Still hoping thou would'st turn and merit it
But now—O God! if life were possible to thee,
I'd be thy friend for ever.

Athulf. O thou art full of blessings!
Thou lovest me Amala one kiss, but one;
It is not much to grant a dying man

Amala. I am thy brother's bride forget not that,
And never but to this thy dying ear
Had I confessed so much in such an hour,
But this be too forgiven. Now farewell
'Twere not amiss if I should die to-night;
Athulf, my love, my only love, farewell.

Athulf. Yet one more minute. If we meet hereafter,
Wilt thou be mine? I have the right to thee;

And, if thou promise, I will let him live
This life, unenvied, with thee.

Amala. I will, Athulf :
Our bliss there will be greater for the sorrow
We now in parting feel.

Athulf. I go, to wait thee. [*Exit AMALA.*]
Farewell, my bliss ! She loves me with her soul,
And I might have enjoyed her, were he fallen.
Ha ! ha ! and I am dying like a rat,
And he shall drink his wine, twenty years hence,
Beside his cherished wife, and speak of me
With a compassionate smile ! Come, Madness, come,
For death is loitering still.

Enter ADALMAR and ZIBA

Adalm. An antidote !
Restore him whom thy poisons have laid low,
If thou wilt not sup with thy fellow fiends
In hell to-night.

Ziba. I pray thee strike me not.
It was his choice ; and why should he be breathing
Against his will ?

Athulf. Ziba, I need not perish.
Now my intents are changed : so, if thou canst,
Dispense me life again.

Adalm. Listen to him, slave,
And once be a preserver.

Ziba. Let him rise.
Why, think you that I'd deal a benefit,
So precious to the noble as is death,
To such a pampered darling of delight
As he that shivers there ? O, not for him,
Blooms my dark Nightshade, nor doth Hemlock brew
Murder for cups within her cavernous root.
Not for him is the metal blessed to kill,
Nor lets the poppy her leaves fall for him.
To heroes such are sacred. He may live,

As long as 'tis the Gout and Dropsy's pleasure
 He wished to play at suicide, and swallowed
 A draught, that may depress and shake his powers
 Until he sleeps awhile ; then all is o'er.
 And so good-night, my princes.

[Exit.

Adalm. Dost thou hear ?

Athulf. Victory ! victory ! I do hear and Fate
 hears

And plays with Life for one of our two souls,
 With dice made of death's bones But shall I do't ?
 O Heaven ! it is a fearful thing to be so saved !

Adalm. Now, brother, thou'lt be happy.

Athulf. With thy wife !

I tell thee, hapless brother on my soul
 Now that I live, I will live, I alone,
 And Amala alone shall be my love
 There's no more room for you, since you have chosen
 The woman and the power which I covet.
 Out of thy bridal bed out of thy throne !

Away to Abel's grave

[Stabs ADALMAR.

Adalm. Hoon murderous fiend !

I was thy brother

[Dies

Athulf. (After a pause) How long a time it is since
 I was here !

And yet I know not whether I have slept,
 Or wandered through a dreary cavernous forest,
 Struggling with monsters 'Tis a quiet place,
 And one inviting strangely to deep rest.
 I have forgotten something ; my whole life
 Seems to have vanished from me to this hour.
 There was a foe whom I should guard against ;
 Who is he ?

Amala. (From her window) Adalmar !

Athulf. (In a low voice) Hush ! hush ! I come to thee.
 Let me but see if he be dead : speak gently,
 His jealous ghost still hears.

Amala.

So, it is over

With that poor troubled heart ! O then to-night
Leave me alone to weep.

Athulf. As thou wilt, lady.

I'm stunned with what has happened. He is dead.

Imala. O night of sorrow ! Bear him from the
threshold.

None of my servants must know where and why
He sought his grave. Remove him. O poor Athulf,
Why did'st thou it ? I'll to my bed and mourn.

[*Retires.*]

Athulf. Hear'st thou, corpse, how I play thy part ?

Thus had he

Pitied me in fraternal charity,

And I lain there so helpless. Precious cup

A few drops more of thy somniferous balm

To keep out spectres from my dreams to-night

My eyelids thirst for slumber. But what's this,

That chills my blood and darkens so my eyes ?

What's going on in my heart and in my brain,

My bones, my life, all over me, all through me ?

It cannot last. No longer shall I be

What I am now. O I am changing, changing,

Dreadfully changing ! Even here and now

A transformation will o'ertake me. Hark !

It is God's sentence muttered over me.

I am unsouled, dishumanized, uncreated,

My passions swell and grow like brutes conceived ;

My feet are fixing roots, and every limb

Is billowy and gigantic, till I seem

A wild, old, wicked mountain in the air :

And the abhorred conscience of this murder,

It will grow up a lion, all alone,

A mighty-maned, grave-mouthed prodigy,

And lair him in my caves : and other thoughts,

Some will be snakes, and bears, and savage wolves :

And when I lie tremendous in the desert,

Or abandoned sea, murderers and idiot men

Will come to live upon my rugged sides,
 Die, and be buried in me. Now it comes ;
 I break, and magnify, and lose my form.
 And yet I shall be taken for a man,
 And never be discovered till I die.
 Terrible, terrible : damned before my time,
 In secret ! 'Tis a dread o'erpowering phantom.
[He lies down by the body and starts as the scene closes.]

SCENE IV

*A large hall in the dead castle. Through the windows
 in the background appears the illuminated city*

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED

Isbr. By my grave, Siegfried, 'tis a wedding-night.
 The wish, that I have courted from my boyhood,
 Comes blooming crowned to my embrace. Methinks,
 The spirit of the city is right lovely ;
 And she will leave her rock to lie sleeping.
 To-night, to be my queenly paramour
 Has it gone twelve ?

Siegfr. This half hour. Here I've set
 A little elock, that you may mark the time.

Isbr. Its hand divides the hour. Are our guards
 here,
 About the castle ?

Siegfr. You've a thousand swordsmen.
 Strong and true soldiers at the stroke of one.

Isbr. One's a good hour, a ghostly hour. To-night
 The ghost of a dead planet shall walk through,
 And shake the pillars of this dukedom down.
 The princes both are occupied and lodged
 Far from us : that is well, they will hear little.
 Go once more round, to the towers and battlements :

The bell, that strikes, says to our hearts ' Be one ' ;
 And, with one motion of a hundred arms,
 Be the beacons fired, the alarums rung,
 And tyrants slain ' Be busy.

Siegfr. I am with them. [*Exit.*]

Isbr. Mine is the hour it strikes, my first of life.
 To-morrow, with what pity and contempt,
 Shall I look back new-born upon myself !

Enter a servant

What now ?

Servant. The banquet's ready.

Isbr. Let it wait awhile :
 The wedding is not ended. That shall be
 No common banquet : none sit there, but souls
 That have outlived a lower state of being.
 Summon the guests. [*Exit servant.*]

Some shall have better cups.

The honest shall be banished from the board
 And the knaves duped by a luxurious bait.

Enter the DUKE, THORWALD, and other guests

Friends, welcome hither in the prince's name,
 Who has appointed me his deputy
 To-night. Why this is right. While men are here,
 They should keep close and warm and thick together,
 Many abreast. Our middle life is broad ;
 But birth and death, the turnstiles that admit us
 On earth and off it, send us, one by one,
 A solitary walk. Lord governor
 Will you not sit ?

Thorw. You are a thrifty liver,
 Keeping the measure of your time beside you.

Isbr. Sir, I'm a melancholy, lonely man,
 A kind of hermit : and to meditate
 Is all my being. One has said, that time

Is a great river running to eternity.
Methinks 'tis all one water, and the fragments,
That crumble off our ever-dwindling life,
Dropping into't, first make the twelve-hour'd circle,
And that spreads outwards to the great round Ever.

Thoru. You're fanciful.

Isbr. A very ballad-maker
We quiet men must thank and dream at least
Who likes a rhyme at odd times. My lord governor,
'Tis tedious waiting until supper time
Shall I read some of my new poetry?
One piece at least?

Thoru. Well; without further preface,
If it be brief.

Isbr. A fragment, quite unfinished,
Of a new ballad called 'The Median Supper'.
It is about Astyages; and I
Differ in somewhat from Herodotus.
But altering the facts of history,
When they are troublesome good governors
Will hardly visit rigorously. Attention!

(Reads) 'Harpagus, hast thou salt enough,
Hast thou broth enough to thy kid?
And hath the cook put right good stuff
Under the pasty lid?'

'I've salt enough, Astyages,
And broth enough in sooth;
And the cook hath mixed the meat and grease
Most tickling to my tooth'.

So spake no wild Red Indian swine,
Eating a forest rattle-snake.
But Harpagus, that Mede of mine,
And King Astyages so spake.

' Wilt have some fruit ? Wilt have some wine ?
Here's what is soft to chew ;
I plucked it from a tree divine,
More precious never grew '.

Harpagus took the basket up,
Harpagus brushed the leaves away ;
But first he filled a brimming cup,
For his heart was light and gay.

And then he looked, and saw a face,
Chopped from the shoulders of some one ;
And who alone could smile in grace
So sweet ? Why, Harpagus, thy son.

' Alas ! ' quoth the king, ' I've no fork,
Alas ! I've no spoon of relief,
Alas ! I've no neck of a stork
To push down this throttling grief.

We've played at kid for child, lost both ;
I'd give you the limbs if I could ;
Some lie in your platter of broth :
Good-night, and digestion be good '.

Now Harpagus said not a word,
Did no eye-water spill :
His heart replied, for that had heard ;
And hearts' replies are still.

How do you like it ?

Duke. Poetry, they say,
Should be the poet's soul ; and here, methinks,
In every word speaks yours.

Isbr. Good. Don't be glad too soon.
Do ye think I've done ? Three minutes' patience
more.

A cannibal of his own boy
 He is a cannibal uncommon,
 And Harpague, he is my joy,
 Because he wept not like a woman.

From the old supper-giver's poll
 He tore the many-kingdomed mitre;
 To him who cost him his son's soul
 He gave it to the fierser father.

‘Old father, but a fool, a blood
 It thou hast made me eat my son,
 Cyrus hath ta'en his grandsire's food;
 There's kid for child, and who has won?’

All kingdomless is thy old head,
 In which began the tyrannous fun,
 Thou'rt slave to him, who should be dead
 There's kid for child, and who has won?’

Now let the clock strike, let the clock strike now,
 And world be altered!

*[The clock strikes, and the hour is repeated
 from the steeples of the city.]*

Trusty timepiece,
 Thou hast struck a mighty hour, and thy work's done;
 For never shalt thou count a meaner one.

[He dashes it on the ground.]

Thus let us break our old life of dull hours,
 And hence begin a being, counted not
 By minutes, but by glories and delights

[He steps to a window and throws it open.]

Thou steeped city, that dost lie below,
 Time doth demand whether thou wilt be free.
 Now give thine answer

*[A trumpet is heard, followed by a peal of cannon.
 Beacons are fired, etc. The stage is lined with
 soldiery.]*

Thorw. Traitor, desperate traitor !
 Yet betrayed traitor ! Make a path for me,
 Or, by the majesty that thou offendest,
 Thou shalt be struck with lightning in thy triumph.

Isbr. All kingdomless is the old mule,
 In whom began the tyrannous fun ;
 Thou'rt slave to him, who was thy fool ;
 There's Duke for Brother ; who has won ?

Take the old man away.

Thorw. I go : but my revenge
 Hangs, in its unseen might, godlike around you.

[*Exit guarded.*]

Isbr. To work, my friends, to work ! Each man
 his way.

These present instants, cling to them ; hold fast ;
 And spring from this one to the next, still upwards.

They're rungs of Jacob's heaven-scaling ladder :

Haste, or 'tis drawn away.

[*Exeunt cæteri.*]

O stingey nature,
 To make me but one man ! Had I but body
 For every several measure of thought and will,
 This night should see me world-crowned.

Enter a messenger

What news bring'st thou ?

Messr. Friends of the governor hold the strongest
 tower,

And shoot with death's own arrows.

Isbr. Get thee back,

And never let me hear thy voice again,

Unless to say, ' 'Tis taken '. Hark ye, sirrah ;

Wood in its walls, lead on its roof, the tower

Cries, ' Burn me ! ' Go and cut away the drawbridge,

And leave the quiet fire to himself :

He knows his business.

[*Exit messenger.*]

Enter ZINA armed

What with you ?

I'll answer,

Ziba.

When one of us is undermost.

Isbr.

Ha ! Midnight,

Can a slave fight ?

Ziba

None better. Come, we'll struggle

And roar, and dash and tumble in our rage

As doth the long-jawed piteous crocodile

With the blood-hoaling hippopotamus,

In quaking Nile

Isbr.

Not quite so great ; but rather,

Like to a Hercules of crockery

Slaying a Nemean lion of barley-sugar,

On a twelfth cake.

[They fight. ZINA is disarmed.]

Now darrest thou cry for mercy ?

Ziba. Never. Eternity ! Come give me that,

And I will thank thee.

Isbr

Something like a man,

And something like a fool — Thou'rt such a reptile,

That I do like thee — pack up thy black life

I would not make my brother King and Fool,

Friend Death, so poor a present — Hence !

[Exit ZIBA.]

They're busy.

'Tis a hot hour, which Murder steals from Love,

To beget ghosts in.

Enter SIEGFRIED

Now ?

Siegfr. Triumph ! They cannot stand another half hour.

The loyal had all supped and gone to bed :

When our alarms thundered, they could only

Gaze from their frightened windows, and some few

We had in towers and churches to besiege.

But, when one hornet's nest was burnt, the rest
Cried quarter, and went home to end their naps.

Ishr. 'Twas good. I knew it was well planned.

Return,

And finish all. I'll follow thee, and see
How Mars looks in his night-cap. [*Exit* SIEGFRIED.

O ! it is nothing now to be a man.

Adam, thy soul was happy that it wore
The first new, mortal members. To have felt
The joy of the first year, when the one spirit
Kept house-warming within its fresh-built clay,
I'd be content to be as old a ghost.

Thine was the hour to live in. Now we're common,
And man is tired of being merely human ;
And I'll be something more : yet, not by tearing
This chrysalis of psyche ere its hour,
Will I break through Elysium. There are sometimes,
Even here, the means of being more than men :
And I by wine, and women, and the sceptre,
Will be, my own way, heavenly in my clay.

O you small star-mob, had I been one of you,
I would have seized the sky some moonless night,
And made myself the sun ; whose morrow rising
Shall see me new-created by myself.

Come, come ; to rest, my soul. I must sleep off
This old plebeian creature that I am. [*Exit.*

ACT V

SCENE I. *An apartment in the ducal castle*

ISBRAND and SILGFRIED

Siegfr. They still wait for you in their council chamber

And clamorously for in ' the keys of the treasure,
The stores of arms, lists of the troops you've hired,
Reports of your past acts and your intentions
Towards the new republic

Isbr. They demand !

A phrase politer would have pleased me better.
The puppets, whose heart strings I hold and play
Between my thumb and fingers, this way, that way ;
Through whose masks, wrinkled o'er by age and passion,
My voice and spirit hath spoken continually ;
Dare now to ape free will ? Well done, Prometheus !
Thou st pitied Punch and given him a soul,
And all his wooden peers — The tools I've used
To chisel an old heap of stony laws
The abandoned sepulchre of a dead dukedom
Into the form my spirit loved and longed for ;
Now that I've perfected her beauteous shape,
And animated it with half my ghost ;
Now that I lead her to our bridal bed,
Dare the mean instruments to lay their plea,
Or their demand forsooth, between us ? Go ;
And tell the fools (you'll find them pale, and dropping
Cold tears of fear out of their trembling cheek-pores) ;
Tell them, for comfort, that I only laughed ;
And bid them all to sup with me to-night,
When we will call the cup to counsel.

Siegfr.

Mean you

Openly to assume a kingly power,

Nor rather inch yourself into the throne ?
Perhaps—but as you will.

Isbr. Siegfried, I'm one
That what I will must do, and what I do
Do in the nick of time without delay.
To-morrow is the greatest fool I know,
Excepting those who put their trust in him.
In one word hear, what soon they all shall hear :
A king's a man, and I will be no man
Unless I am a king. Why, where's the difference ?
Throne steps divide us : they're soon climbed perhaps :
I have a bit of FIAT in my soul,
And can myself create my little world.
Had I been born a four-legged child, methinks
I might have found the steps from dog to man,
And crept into his nature. Are there not
Those that fall down out of humanity,
Into the storey where the four-legged dwell ?
But to the conclave with my message quickly :
I've got a deal to do. *[Exit SIEGFRIED.]*

How I despise
All such mere men of muscle ! It was ever
My study to find out a way to godhead,
And on reflection soon I found that first
I was but half created ; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make. Therefore I fashioned
A will above my will, that plays upon it,
As the first soul doth use in men and cattle.
There's lifeless matter ; add the power of shaping,
And you've the crystal : add again the organs,
Wherewith to subdue sustenance to the form
And manner of one's self, and you've the plant :
Add power of motion, senses, and so forth,
And you've all kind of beasts ; suppose a pig :
To pig add reason, foresight, and such stuff,
Then you have man. What shall we add to man,

To bring him higher ? I begin to think
 That's a discovery I soon shall make
 Thus, owing nought to books, but being read
 In the odd nature of much fish and fowl,
 And cabbages and beasts, I've raised myself,
 By this comparative philosophy,
 Above your shoulders, my sage gentlemen,
 Have patience but a little and I keep still
 I'll find means by and by to fly higher. [Exit.

SCENE II

Another apartment

The DUKE, SIEGFRIED, MARIO, ZIBA and conspirators

A Conspirator. (To Siegfried) Said he nought else ?

Siegfr. What else he said was worse.

He is no more Isbrand of yesterday ;
 But looks and talks like one who in the night
 Hath made a bloody compact with some fiend,
 His being is grown greater than it was
 And must make room, by cutting off men's lives,
 For its shadowy increase.

Conspir. O friends, what have we done ?
 Sold, for a promise, still security,
 The mild familiar laws our fathers left us ;
 Uprooted our firm country.

Ziba. And now sit,
 Weeping like babes, among its ruins. Up !
 You have been cheated, now turn round upon him.
 In this his triumph pull away his throne,
 And let him into hell

Another conspir. But that I heard it
 From you, his inmost counsel and next heart,
 I'd not believe it. Why, the man was open ;

We looked on him, and saw our looks reflected
 Our hopes and wishes found an echo in him ;
 He pleased us all, I think. Let's doubt the worst,
 Until we see.

Duke. Until you feel and perish.
 You looked on him, and saw your looks reflected,
 Because his soul was in a dark deep well,
 And must draw down all others to increase it :
 Your hopes and wishes found an echo in him,
 As out of a sepulchral cave, prepared
 For you and them to sleep in. To be brief,
 He is the foe of all ; let all be his,
 And he must be o'erwhelmed.

Siegfr. I throw him off,
 Although I feared to say so in his presence,
 And think you all will fear. O that we had
 Our good old noble Duke, to help us here !

Duke. Of him I have intelligence The governor,
 Whose guards are bribed and awed by these good
 tidings,
 Waits us within. There we will speak at large :
 And O ! may justice, for this once, descend
 Like lightning-footed vengeance.

Mario. It will come ,
 But when, I know not Liberty, whose shade
 Attends, smiles still in patience, and that smile
 Melts tyrants down in time and, till she bids,
 To strike were unavailing.

[*Excunt all but SIEGFRIED and ZIBA.*

Ziba. Let them talk .
 I mean to do ; and will let no one's thoughts,
 Or reasonable cooling counsels, mix
 In my resolve to weaken it, as little
 As shall a drop of rain or pity-water
 Adulterate this thick blood-curdling liquor,
 Siegfried, I'll free you from this thankless master.

Siegfr. I understand. To-night ? Why that is best.

Man's greatest secret, like the earth's, the devil,
 Slips through a keyhole or the smallest chink.
 In plottings there is still some crack unstopped,
 Some heart not air-tight, some fellow who doth talk
 In sleep or in his cups, or tells his tale,
 Love-drunk, unto his secret-selling mistress.
 How shall't be done though ?

Ziba I'm his cup-bearer,
 An office that he gave me in division
 And I will execute so cunningly
 That he shall have no lips to laugh with long ;
 Nor spare and spurn me as he did last night.
 Let him beware, who shows a dogged slave
 Pity or mercy ! I or the drug, 'tis good
 There is a little, hairy, green-eyed snake,
 Of voice like to the woody nightingale
 And ever singing pitifully sweet,
 That nestles in the barry bones of death,
 And is his dearest pet and playfellow.
 The homed froth about that serpent's tongue
 Deserves not so his habitation's name
 As doth the cup that I shall serve to him [Exit.

SCENE III

A meadow

SIBYLA and ladies, gathering flowers

Sibyl. Enough ; the dew falls, and the glow-worm's
 shining ;
 Now let us search our basket for the fairest
 Among our flowery booty, and then sort them.

Lady. The snowdrops are all gone ; but here are
 cowslips,
 And primroses, upon whose petals maidens,
 Who love to find a moral in all things,
 May read a lesson of pale bashfulness ;

And violets, that have taught their young buds whiteness,

That blue-eyed ladies' lovers might not tear them
For the old comparison ; daisies without number,
And buttercups and lilies of the vale.

Sibyl. Sit then ; and we will bind some up with rushes,
And wind us garlands. Thus it is with man ;
He looks on nature as his supplement,
And still will find out likenesses and tokens
Of consanguinity, in the world's graces,
To his own being. So he loves the rose,
For the cheek's sake, whose touch is the most grateful
At nightfall to his lip ; and, as the stars rise,
Welcomes the memories of delighting glances,
Which go up as an answer o'er his soul.

Lady. And therefore earth and all its ornaments,
Which are the symbols of humanity
In forms refined, and efforts uncompleted,
Graceful and innocent, temper the heart,
Of him who muses and compares them skilfully,
To glad belief and tearful gratitude.
This is the sacred source of poesy.

Sibyl. While we are young and free from care, we
think so.
But, when old age or sorrow brings us nearer
To spirits and their interests, we see
Few features of mankind in outward nature ;
But rather signs inviting us to heaven.
I love flowers too ; not for a young girl's reason,
But because these brief visitors to us
Rise yearly from the neighbourhood of the dead,
To show us how far fairer and more lovely
Their world is ; and return thither again,
Like parting friends that beckon us to follow,
And lead the way silent and smilingly.
Fair is the season when they come to us,
Unfolding the delights of that existence

Which is below us : 'tis the time of spirits
Who with the flowers, and like them, leave their graves :
But when the earth is sealed, and none dare come
Upwards to cheer us, and man's left alone,
We have cold, cutting winter. For no bridal,
Excepting with the grave, are flowers fit emblems.

Lady And why then do we pluck and wreathe them
now ?

Sibyl Because a bridal with the grave is near
You will have need of them to strew a corpse
Ave, maïens ! I am dying, but lament not
It is to me a wished for change of being.
Yonder behold the evening star arising,
Appearing bright over the mountain-tops,
He has just died out of another region,
Perhaps a cloudy one ; and so die I,
And the high heaven, serene and light with joy,
Which I pass into, will be my love's soul,
That will encompass me ; and I shall tremble,
A brilliant star of never-dying delight,
'Mid the ethereal depths of his eternity.
Now lead me homewards — and I'll lie me down,
To sleep not, but to rest — then strew me o'er
With these flowers fresh out of the ghosts' abodes,
And they will lead me softly down to them. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV

*The ruined cathedral, the sepulchre, and the cloisters ;
on which latter is painted the DANCE OF DEATH.
In the foreground a large covered table, with empty
chairs set round it Moonlight The clock strikes
twelve, on which is heard a*

Song in the air

The moon doth mock and make me crazy,
And midnight tolls her horrid clam
On ghostly homage Fie, for shame !

Deaths, to stand painted there so lazy.
There's nothing but the stars about us,
And they're no tell-tales, but shine quiet ;
Come out, and hold a midnight riot,
Where no mortal fool dare flout us
And, as we rattle in the moonlight pale ;
Wanderers shall think 'tis the nightingale.

*[The Deaths, and the figures paired with them,
come out of the walls : some seat themselves at
the table, and appear to feast, with mocking
gestures ; others dance fantastically to a rattling
music, singing.]*

And it frightens the lizard,
 And, like an old hen, the wall
 Cries 'cluck! cluck! back to my gizzard;
 'Tis warm, though it's stony,
 'My chickens so bony'.
 So come let us hide, each with his bride,
 For the wicked are coming who have not yet died.
[The figures return to their places in the wall.]

Enter ISBRAND the DUKE, SIGGRIED, MARIO, WOLFRAM and his other conspirators, followed by ZIBA and other attendants

Isbr. You wonder at my banqueting-house perhaps :
 But 'tis my fashion, when the sky is clear,
 To drink my wine out in the open air
 And this our sometime meeting-place is shadowy,
 And the wind howleth through the ruins bravely.
 Now sit, my gentle guests : and you, dark man,
[To WOLFR.

Make us as merry as you can and proudly
 Bear the new offence which your train and the pilgrim,
 Has begged for you : 'twas my profession once,
 Do justice to that cap.

*[They sit round the table, and partake of the feast,
 making gestures somewhat similar to those
 mocked by the figures.]*

Duke. Now, having washed our hearts of love and
 sorrow,
 And pledged the rosiness of many a cheek,
 And, with the name of many a lustrous maiden,
 Ennobled enough cups ; feed, once again,
 Our hearing with another merry song.
Isbr. 'Tis pity that the music of this dukedom,
 Under the former government, went wrong,
 Like all the rest : my ministers shall look to't.
 But sing again, my men.

Siegfr. What shall it be,
 And of what turn ? Shall battle's drum be heard ?
 The chase's trumpet ? Shall the noise of Bacchus
 Swell in our cheeks, or lazy, sorrowing love
 Burthen with sighs our ballad ?

Isbr. Try the piece,
 You sang me yesternight to sleep with best.
 It is for such most profitable ends
 We crowned folks encourage all the arts.

Song

My goblet's golden lips are dry,
 And, as the rose doth pine
 For dew, so doth for wine
 My goblet's cup ;
 Rain, O ! rain, or it will die ;
 Rain, fill it up !

Arise, and get thee wings to-night,
 Ætna ! and let run o'er
 Thy wines, a hill no more,
 But darkly frown
 A cloud, where eagles dare not soar,
 Dropping rain down.

Isbr. A very good and thirsty melody :
 What say you to it, my court poet ?

Wolfr. Good melody ! If this be a good melody,
 I have at home, fattening in my sty,
 A sow that grunts above the nightingale.
 Why this will serve for those, who feed their veins
 With crust, and cheese of dandelion's milk,
 And the pure Rhine. When I am sick o' mornings,
 With a horn-spoon tinkling my porridge-pot,
 'Tis a brave ballad : but in Bacchanal night,
 O'er wine, red, black, or purple-bubbling wine,
 That takes a man by the brain and whirls him round,

By Bacchus' lip ! I like a full-voiced fellow,
A craggy-throated, fat-cheeked trumpeter,
A barker, a moon-howler, who could sing
Thus, as I heard the snaky mermaids sing
In Phlegethon, that hydrophobic river,
One May-morning in Hell.

Song

Old Adam the carrion crow
The old crow of Cairo
He sat in the shower and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest,
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather,
And the bough swung under his nest ;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying ? O no ;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho ! Eve, my grey carrion wife,
When we have supped on kings' marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life ?
Our nest it is queen Cleopatra's skull,
'Tis cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full :
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
Is that the wind dying ? O no ;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Isbr Pilgrim, it is with pleasure I acknowledge,
In this your friend, a man of genuine taste.
He imitates my style in prose and verse.
And be assured that this deserving man

Shall soon be knighted, when I have invented
The name of my new order ; and perhaps
I'll make him minister. I pledge you, Fool :
Black ! something exquisite.

Zéa.

Here's wine of Egypt.

Isbr. What do you mean, by bidding me not drink ?

Answer, I'm thirsty.

Wolfr. Push aside the boughs :

Let's see the night, and let the night see us.

Isbr. Will the fool read us astronomic lectures ?

Wolfr. Above stars ; stars below ; round the moon stars.

Isbrand, don't sip the grape-juice

Isbr. Must I drink,

Or not according to a horoscope ?

Says Jupiter, no ! Then he's a hypocrite.

Wolfr. Look upwards, how 'tis thick and full, how sprinkled.

This heaven, with the planets. Now, consider ;

Which will you have ? The sun's already taken,

But you may find an oar in the half moon,

Or drive the comet's dragons ; or, if you'd be

Rather a little snug and quiet god,

A one-horse star is standing ready for you.

Choose, and then drink

Isbr. If you are sane or sober,

What do you mean ?

Wolfr. It is a riddle, sir,

Siegfried, your friend, can solve.

Siegfr. Some sorry jest.

Wolfr. You'll laugh but palely at its sting, I think.

Hold the dog down ; disarm him ; grasp his right.

My lord, this worthy courtier loved your virtues

To such excess of piety, that he wished

To send you by a bye-path into heaven.

Drink, and you're straight a god—or something else.

A conspirator O murderous villain ! Kill him where he sits

Isbr. Be quiet, and secure him. Siegfried, Siegfried ;

Why hast thou no more genius in thy villany ?

Wilt thou catch kings in cobwebs ? Lead him hence :

Chain him to-night in prison, and to-morrow
Put a cord round his neck and hang him up,
In the society of the old dog
That killed my neighbour's sheep.

Siegfr.

I do thank thee.

In faith, I hoped to have seen grass grow o'er you,
And should have much rejoiced. But, as it is,
I'll willingly die upright in the sun :
And I can better spare my life than you.
Good-night then, Fool and Duke : you have my curse ;
And Hell will have you some day down for hers :
So let us part like friends. My lords, good sleep
This night, the next I hope you'll be as well
As I shall. Should there be a lack of rope,
I recommend my bowstring as a strong one.
Once more, farewell : I wish you all, believe me,
Happily old, mad, sick, and dead, and cursed.

[*Exit guarded.*]

Isbr. That gentleman should have applied his talent
To writing new-year's wishes. Another cup !

Wolfr. He has made us dull : so I'll begin a story.
As I was newly dead, and sat beside
My corpse, looking on it, as one who muses
Gazing upon a house he was burnt out of,
There came some merry children's ghosts to play
At hide-and-seek in my old body's corners :—

Isbr. But how came you to die and yet be here ?

Wolfr. Did I say so ? Excuse me. I am absent,
And forget always that I'm just now living.
But dead and living, which are which ? A question
Not easy to be solved. Are you alone,
Men, as you're called, monopolists of life ?
Or is all being, living ? and *what is*,
With less of toil and trouble, more alive,
Than they, who cannot, half a day, exist
Without repairing their flesh mechanism ?
Or do you owe your life, not to this body,

But to the sparks of spirit that fly off,
 Each instant disengaged and hurrying
 From little particles of flesh that die ?
 If so, perhaps you are the dead yourselves :
 And these ridiculous figures on the wall
 Laugh, in their safe existence, at the prejudice,
 That you are anything like living beings
 But hark ! The bell tolls and a funeral comes
*[A funeral procession passes on stage the pall
 borne by ladies.]*

Dirge

We do lie beneath the grass
 In the moonlight, in the shade
 Of the yew-tree. They that pass
 Hear us not. We are afraid
 They would envy our delight,
 In our graves by glow-worm night.
 Come follow us, and smile as we ;
 We sail to the rock in the ancient waves,
 Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
 And the drowned and the shipwrecked have
 happy graves

[The procession passes out.]

Duke. What's this that comes and goes, so shadow-
 like ?

Attendant. They bear the fair Sibylla to her grave.

Duke. She dead !

Darest thou do this, thou grave-begotten man,
 Thou son of Death ? *(To WOLFRAM)*

Wolfr. Sibylla dead already ?

I wondered how so fair a thing could live :
 And, now she is no more, it seems to me
 She was too beautiful ever to die !

Isbr. She, who was to have been my wife ? Here,
 fellow ;

Take thou this flower to strew upon her grave,

A lily of the valley ; it bears bells,
For even the plants, it seems, must have their fool,
So universal is the spirit of folly ;
And whisper, to the nettles of her grave,
' King Death hath asses' ears '.

Mario. (Stabbing Isbrand) At length thou art condemned to punishment.

Down, thou usurper, to the earth and grovel !
The pale form, that has led me up to thee,
Bids me deal this ; and, now my task is o'er,
Beckons me hence.

[*Exit.*]

Isbr. Villain, thou dig'st deep :
But think you I will die ? Can I, that stand
So strong and powerful here, even if I would,
Fall into dust and wind ? No : should I groan,
And close my eyes, be fearful of me still.
'Tis a good jest : I but pretend to die,
That you may speak about me bold and loudly ;
Then I come back and punish ' or I go
To dethrone Pluto. It is wine I spilt,
Not blood, that trickles down.

Enter THORWALD with soldiers

Thorw. Long live duke Melveric, our rightful
sovereign !

Down with the traitorous usurper, Isbrand !

All. Long live duke Melveric !

Isbr. Duke Isbrand, long live he !
Duke Melveric is deposed.

Thorw. Receive the homage
Of your revolted city.

Duke. Thorwald, thanks.
The usurper has his death-wound.

Thorw. Then cry, Victory !
And long life to duke Melveric ! once more.

Isbr. I will live longer : when he's dead and buried,
A hundred years hence, or, it may be, more,

I shall return and take my dukedom back.
Imagine not I'm weak enough to perish.
The grave, and all its arts, I do defy.

Wolfr. Meantime Death sends you back this cap of office.

At his court you're elected to the post:
Go and enjoy it.

[He sets the fool's cap on Isbrand's head.]

Isbr. Bye and live. But let not
Duke Melveric think that I part unrevenged
For I hear in the clouds about me voices,
Singing

*All kingdomless is thy old head,
In which began the tyrannous fun;
He fetches thee, who should be dead,
There's Duke for Brother! Who has won?*

I jest and sing, and yet alas! am he,
Who in a wicked masque would play the Devil;
But jealous Lucifer himself appeared,
And bore him—whither? I shall know to-morrow,
For now Death makes indeed a fool of me. *[Dies.]*

Duke. Where are my sons? I have not seen them lately.

Go to the bridegroom's lodgings, and to Athulf's,
And summon both. *[Exit attendant.]*

Wolfr. They will be here; and sooner
Than you would wish. Meanwhile, my noble Duke,
Some friends of mine behind us seem to stir.
They wish, in honour of your restoration,
In memory also of your glorious deeds,
To present masque and dance to you. Is't granted?

Duke. Surely, and they are welcome, for we need
Some merriment amid these sad events.

Wolfr. You in the wall there then, my thin light
archers,
Come forth and dance a little 'tis the season

When you may celebrate Death's Harvest-Home.

[*A dance of Deaths. In the middle of it enter AMALA, followed by a bier on which the corpse of Adalmar is borne. The dance goes out.*]

Duke. What's this ? Another mummerly ?

Wolfr. The antimasque,

I think they call it ; 'tis satirical.

Amala. My lord, you see the bridal bed that waits me.
Your son, my bridegroom, both no more, lies here,
Cold, pale, abandoned in his youthful blood :
And I his bride have now no duty else,
But to kneel down, wretched, beside his corpse,
Crying for justice on his murderers.

Duke. Could my son die, and I not know it sooner ?
Why, he is cold and stiff. O ! now my crown
Is sunk down to the dust, my life is desolate.
Who did this deed ?

Enter ATHULF

Wolfr. Athulf, answer thou !

Amala. O no ! Suspect not him. He was last night
Gentle, and full of love, to both of us,
And could imagine ne'er so foul a deed.
Suspect not him ; for so thou mak'st me feel
How terrible it is that he is dead,
Since his next friend's accused of such a murder :
And torture not his ghost, which must be here,
Striving in vain to utter one soul-sound,
To speak the guiltless free. Tempt not cruelly
The helplessness of him who is no more,
Nor make him discontented with the state,
Which lets him not assert his brother's innocence.

Duke. (*To Athulf*) Answer ! Thou look'st like one,
unto whose soul
A secret voice, all day and night, doth whisper,
'Thou art a murderer'. Is it so ? Then rather
Speak not. Thou wear'st a dagger at thy side ;

Avenge the murdered man, thou art his brother ;
 And never let me hear from mortal lips
 That my son was so guilty.

Athulf. *Amala,*
 Still love me ; weep some gentle drops for me ;
 And, when we meet again, fulfil thy promise.
 Father, look here !

[He kisses AMALA'S FATHER and then stabs himself.]

Amala O *Athulf* ! by one moment to deny it,
 I ask that, and that only—Lo ! old man,
 He hath in indignation done the deed.
 Since thou couldst think him for an instant guilty,
 He held the life, which such a base suspicion
 Had touched, and the old father who could think it,
 Unworthy of him more—and he did well
 I bade thee give me vengeance for my bridegroom,
 And thou hast slain the only one who loved me.
 Suspect and kill me too : but there's no need ;
 For such a one, as I, God never let
 Live more than a few hours

[She falls into the arms of her ladies.]

Duke Thorwald, the crown is yours—I reign no more.
 But when, thou spectre, is thy vengeance o'er ?

Wolfr. *Melveric*, all is finished, which to witness
 The spirit of retribution called me hither.
 Thy sons have perished for like cause, as that
 For which thou did'st assassinate thy friend.
Sibylla is before us gone to rest
 Blessing and Peace to all who are departed !
 But thee, who daredst to call up into life
 And the unholy world's forbidden sunlight,
 Out of his grave him who reposed softly,
 One of the ghosts doth summon, in like manner,
 Thee, still alive, into the world o' th' dead.

[Exit with the DUKE into the sepulchre.]

The curtain falls

L'ENVOI

Who findeth comfort in the stars and flowers
Apparelling the earth and evening sky,
That moralize throughout their silent hours,
And woo us heaven-wards till we wish to die ;
Oft hath he singled from the soothing quire,
For its calm influence, one of softest charm
To still his bosom's pangs, when they desire
A solace for the world's remorseless harm.
Yet they, since to be beautiful and bless
Is but their way of life, will still remain
Cupbearers to the bee in humbleness,
Or look untouched down through the moony rain,
Living and being worlds in bright content,
Ignorant, not in scorn, of his affection's bent.

So thou, whom I have gazed on, seldom seen,
Perchance forgotten to the very name,
Hast in my thoughts the living glory been,
In beauty various, but in grace the same.
At eventide, if planets were above,
Crowning anew the sea of day bereft,
Swayed by the dewy heaviness of love,
My heart felt pleasure in the track thou'dst left :
And so all sights, all musings, pure and fair,
Touching me, raised thy memory to sight,
As the sea-suns awakes the sun in air—
If they were not reflections, thou the light.
Therefore bend hitherwards, and let thy mildness
Be glassed in fragments through this storm and wild-
ness. .

And pardon, if the sick light of despair
Usurp thy semblance oft, with tearful gleam
Displaying haunted shades of tangled care
In my sad scenes soon shall a pearly beam,
Shed from the forehead of my heaven's queen—
That front thy hand is pressed on—bring delight.
Nor frown, nor blame me if such charms between
Spring mockery or thoughts of dreadest night
Death's darts are sometimes Loves—So Nature tells,
When laughing waters close o'er drowning men,
When in flowers' homed corners poison dwells,
When Beauty dies, and the unwearied ken,
Of those who seek a cure for long despair,
Will learn. Death hath his dimples everywhere,
Love only on the cheek, which is to me most fair

NOTES

THE historical fact, on which the preceding drama may be considered as founded, viz. that a Duke of Munsterberg in Silesia was stabbed to death by his court-fool, is to be found in Flögel's *Gesch. d. Hoffnarren Liegnitz v. Leipzig 1789.* 8. S. 297 u. folg.

Page 91, line 21.

'Aldabaron, called by the Hebrews Luz'

As this antiquity in osteological history seems to have been banished from anatomical works since the good old days of Bartholinus and Kulmus, it will perhaps be agreeable to the curious reader to find here some notice of it, collected out of the rabbinical writings, etc., by the author's Russian friend Bernhard Reich, whose knowledge of the science and language renders him singularly capable of such investigations.

The bone Luz is, according to the Rabbins, the only one which withstands dissolution after death, and out of which the body will be developed at the resurrection. A curious passage on the subject occurs in Berestieth raba. Sect. 28, 'Even the Luz of the shedrah (*backbone*), 'out of which God will hereafter raise the son of earth, 'is annihilated'. Old anatomists as Bartholinus, Vesalius, etc. mention it, but are not certain what bone was so designated, whether it is situated in the hand, foot, or vertebral column, Luz is however beyond a doubt the os coccygis of the osteologists, for the rabbins say that it lies under the 18th Chulia *vertebra*. (Maaroch Hamarachot Article *Luz*), and it appears from various passages in the Talmud that the *vertebræ* of the neck were not reckoned by the rabbinical writers

to the vertebral column but that they began to count the latter from the first dorsal vertebra, like Hippocrates (*de ossium natura*. V.) They say eighteen vertebræ (*chuliot*) compose the shedrah vertebral column—See *Ohol. c. i. Berach* p. 30. Now, if we reckon the twelve dorsal, five lumbar vertebræ, and the os sacrum together we have the eighteen bones under which Luz is to be found. Luz is therefore the os coccygis. Etymology is also for this opinion, for Luz is an almond—the *Largum* Jonathan translates in many places the Hebrew Shaked almond, plural *Sekedim* Luz and Luzin (*Num. xvii. xxii.*, etc.). The form of the bone is really similar to that of an almond. In the lexicon we find the explanation of the word given from *κόρυξ*, cuckoo, but this bird appears to have very little to do with the bone, and it is probable that the term is derived by some corruption from *κορκος*, a nut or the seed of any tree.

THE BRIDES' TRAGEDY

First Published 1822

PERSONS REPRESENTED

THE DUKE.

LORD ERNEST.

HESPERUS ; his Son.

ORLANDO.

CLAUDIO.

MORDRED.

HUBERT.

A HUNTSMAN.

BOY ; Page to Orlando.

JAILOR.

OLIVIA ; Sister to Orlando.

VIOLETTA ; her Companion.

LENORA ; Wife of Mordred.

FLORIBEL ; her Daughter.

Lords, Citizens, Attendants, Guards, etc.

THE BRIDES' TRAGEDY

ACT I

SCENE I *A garden*

HESPERUS *alone*

Hesp. Now Eve has strewn the sun's wide billowy couch

With rosered feathers moulted from her wing
Still scanty-sprinkled clouds, like lagging sheep,
Some golden-fleeced, some streaked with delicate pink,
Are creeping up the welkin, and behind
The wind their boisterous shepherd, whistling drives
 them

From the drear wilderness of night to drink
Antipodean noon At such a time,
While to wild melody fantastic dreams
Dance their gay morrice in the midmost air,
And sleepers' truant fancies fly to join them ;
While that winged song, the restless nightingale
Turns her sad heart to music, sweet it is
Unseen on the moss-cushioned sward to lean,
And into some coy ear pour out the soul
In sighs and whispers.

Enter FLORIBEL

So late, Floribel ?

Nay, since I see that arch smile on thy cheek
Rippling so prettily, I will not chide,

Although the breeze and I have sighed for you
A dreary while, and the veiled Moon's mild eye
Has long been seeking for her loveliest nymph.
Come, come, my love, or shall I call you bride?

Flor. E'en what you will, so that you hold me dear.

Hesp. Well, both my love and bride; see, here's a
bower

Of eglantine with honeysuckles woven,
Where not a spark of prying light creeps in,
So closely do the sweets enfold each other.
'Tis Twilight's home; come in, my gentle love,
And talk to me. So! I've a rival here;
What's this that sleeps so sweetly on your neck?

Flor. Jealous so soon, my Hesperus? Look then,
It is a bunch of flowers I pulled for you
Here's the blue violet, like Pandora's eye,
When first it darkened with immortal life.

Hesp. Sweep as thy lips. Fie on those taper fingers,
Have they been brushing the long grass aside
To drag the daisy from its hiding-place,
Where it shuns light, the Danae of flowers,
With gold up-hoarded on its virgin lap?

Flor. And here's a treasure that I found by chance,
A lily of the valley; low it lay
Over a mossy mound, withered and weeping
As on a fairy's grave.

Hesp.

Of all the posy

Give me the rose, though there's a tale of blood
Soiling its name. In elfin annals old

'Tis writ, how Zephyr, envious of his love,
(The love he bare to Summer, who since then
Has weeping visited the world;) once found
The baby Perfume cradled in a violet;
('Twas said the beauteous bantling was the child
Of a gay bee, that in his wantonness
Toyed with a peabud in a lady's garland;)
The felon winds, confederate with him,

Bound the sweet slumberer with golden chains,
 Pulled from the wreathed laburnum, and together
 Deep cast him in the bosom of a rose,
 And fed the fettered wretch with dew and air.
 At length his soul, that was a lover's sigh,
 Waned from his body, and the guilty blossom
 His heart's blood stained. The twilight-haunting gnat
 His requiem whined, and his bell's toll'd his knell;
 And still the bell in the love's thought
 With melancholy song, from power to power,
 Goes seeking the east of spring.

Her. Take it then,
 In its green sheath. What guess you, Hesperus,
 I dreamed last night? Indeed it makes me sad,
 And yet I think you love me.

Hesp. By the planet
 That sheds its tender blue on lovers' sleeps,
 Thou art my sweetest, nay, mine only thought:
 And when my heart forgets thee, may yon heaven
 Forget to guard me.

Her. Alas! I knew thou didst,
 Yet surely mine's a sad and lonely fate
 Thus to be wed to secrecy. I doubt,
 E'en while I know my doubts are causeless torments,
 Yet I conjure thee, if indeed I hold
 Some share in thy affections, cast away
 The blank and ugly vizard of concealment,
 And, if mine homely breeding do not shame thee,
 Let thy bride share her noble father's blessing.

Hesp. In truth I will; nay, prithee let me kiss
 That naughty tear away, I will, by heaven,
 For, though austere and old, my sire must gaze
 On thy fair innocence with glad forgiveness.
 Look up, my love,
 See how yon orb, dressed out in all her beams,
 Puts out the common stars, and sails along
 The stately Queen of heaven; so shall thy beauties,

But the rich casket of a noble soul,
Shine on the world and bless it. Tell me now
This frightful vision.

Flor. You will banter me ;
But I'm a simple girl, and oftentimes
In solitude am very, very mournful :
And now I think how silly 'twas to weep
At such an harmless thing : well, you shall hear.
'Twas on a fragrant bank I laid me down,
Laced o'er and o'er with verdant tendrils, full
Of dark-red strawberries. Anon there came
On the wind's breast a thousand tiny noises,
Like flowers' voices, if they could but speak ;
Then slowly did they blend in one sweet strain,
Melodiously divine ; and buoyed the soul
Upon their undulations. Suddenly,
Methought, a cloud swam swanlike o'er the sky,
And gently kissed the earth, a fleecy nest,
With roses, ruffled from the cheek of Morn,
Sportively strewn ; upon the ethereal couch,
Her fair limbs blending with the enamoured mist,
Lovely above the portraiture of words,
In beauteous languor lay the Queen of Smiles :
In tangled garlands, like a golden haze,
Or fay-spun threads of light, her locks were floating,
And in their airy folds slumbered her eyes.
Dark as the nectar-grape that gems the vines
In the bright orchard of the Hesperides.
Within the ivory cradle of her breast
Gambolled the urchin god, with saucy hand
Dimpling her cheeks, or sipping eagerly
The rich ambrosia of her melting lips :
Beneath them swarmed a bustling mob of Loves,
Tending the sparrow stud, or with bees' wings
Imping their arrows. Here stood one alone,
Blowing a pyre of blazing lovers' hearts
With bellows full of absence-caused sighs :

Near him his work-mate mended broken vows
 With dangerous gold, or strung soft rhymes together
 Upon a lady's tress. Some swelled their cheeks,
 Like curling rose-leaves, or the red wine's bubbles,
 In petulant debate, gallantly tilting
 Astride their darts. And one there was alone,
 Who with wet downcast eyelids threw aside
 The remnants of a broken heart, and looked
 Into my face, and said, 'Alack, and woe
 Of fickleness and weakness is mine own!'—

He said, and so I said, and said my own dear girl
 Dismal as a curse one for this foolish dream?
 I wish I could be angry—hate, distrustful,
 Those penitent blushes in my breast, while I
 Sing you a silly song old nurses use
 To hush their crying babes with—Tenderly
 'Twill chide you.

Song

Poor old beggar!—Alas!
 He never thought of the cold winds that
 A-listen to the secret howls that cry,
 And the cold wind's goblin prate,
 Beside him lay his staff of yew
 With withered willow twined,
 His scant grey hair all wet with dew,
 His cheeks with grief ybrimed;
 And his cry it was ever, alack!
 Alack, and woe is me!

Anon a wanton imp astray
 His piteous moaning hears,
 And from his bosom steals away
 His rosary of tears
 With his plunder fled that urchin elf,
 And hid it in your eyes.

Then tell me back the stolen pelf,
Give up the lawless prize ;
Or your cry shall be ever, alack !
Alack, and woe is me !

Hesp. Not yet asleep ?

Flor. Asleep ! No, I could ever,
Heedless of times and seasons, list to thee.
But now the chilly breeze is sallying out
Of dismal clouds ; and silent midnight walks
Wrapt in her mourning robe. I fear it's time
To separate.

Hesp. So quickly late ! oh cruel, spiteful hours,
Why will ye wing your steeds from happiness,
And put a leaden drag upon your wheels
When grief hangs round our hearts Soon will we meet,
And to part never more

Flor. Oh ! that dear never,
It will pay all. Good-night, and think of me.

Hesp. Good-night, my love ; may music-winged sleep
Bind round thy temples with her poppy wreath ;
Soft slumbers to thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A room in ORLANDO'S palace

CLAUDIO and ORLANDO meeting

Orl. Thanks for thy speed, good Claudio ; is all done
As I have ordered ?

Claudio. Could I be unwilling
In the performance of what you command,
I'd say with what regret I led Lord Ernest
Into the prison. My dear lord,
He was your father's friend—

Orl. And he is mine.
 You must not think Orlando so forgetful
 As to abuse the reverence of age,
 An age, like his, of piety and virtue ;
 'Tis but a fraud of kindness, sportive force.

Claudio. You joy me much, for now I dare to own
 I almost thought it was a cruel deed

Orl. Nay, you shall hear — He says he owes my
 father

Of which his wife has — — — — — fourth,
 Are never to be — — — — — Hesperus
 His son be w — — — — — Now
 This Hesperus you tell me, is a votary,
 A too much favoured votary of my goddess,
 The Dian of our forests Floribel,
 Therefore I use this show of cruelty,
 To scare a rival and to gain a brother.

Claudio. Now by the patches on the cheek of the moon,
 (Is't not a pretty oath ?) a good romance ;
 We'll have't on bal' of metre with a burthen
 Of sighs, how one bright glance of a brown damsel
 Lit up the trader of Orlando's heart
 In a hot blaze.

Orl. Enough to kindle up
 An altar in my breast ! 'Twas but a moment,
 And yet I would not sell that grain of time
 For thy eternity of heartlessness.

Claudio. Well, well. I can bear nonsense from a lover ;
 Oh, I've been mad threescore and eighteen times
 And three quarters ; written twenty yards, two nails,
 An inch and a quarter, cloth measure, of sonnets ;
 Wasted as much salt water as would pickle
 Leviathan, and sighed enough to set up
 Another wind, ———

Orl. Claudio, I pray thee, leave me ;
 I relish not this mockery

Claudio. Good sir, attend

To my experience. You've no stock as yet
To set up lover : get yourself a pistol
Without a touch-hole, or at least remember,
If it be whole, to load it with wet powder ;
I've known a popgun, well applied or even
The flying of a cork, give reputation
To courage and despair. A gross of garters,
Warranted rotten, will be found convenient.

Orl. Now you are troublesome.

Clau. One precept more ;
Purge and drink watergruel, lanthorn jaws
Are interesting ; fat men can't write sonnets,
And indigestion turns true love to bile.

Orl. 'Tis best to part. If you desire to serve me,
Persuade the boy to sacrifice his passion ;
I'll lead him to Olivia, they were wont
In childhood to be playmates, and some love
May lie beneath the ashes of that friendship,
That needs her breath alone to burst and blaze.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III

A prison

Enter guards leading LORD ERNEST in chains

L. Ern. I pray you do not pity me. I feel
A kind of joy to meet Calantry,
My old, old friend again. Go, tell your lord,
I give him thanks for these his iron bounties.
How now ? I thought you led me to a prison,
A dismal antechamber of the tomb,
Where creatures dwell, whose ghosts but half inhabit
Their ruinous flesh-houses ; here is air
As fresh as that the bird of morning sings in,
And shade that scarce is dusk, but just enough

To please the meek and twilight-loving eye
Of lone Religion. 'Tis an hermitage
Where I may sit and tell my o'erpassed years,
And fit myself for dying. My old heart
Holds not enough of gratitude to pay
This noble kindness, that in guise of cruelty
Compels me to my good.

Guard I am most glad
That you endure thus cheerfully remember
Your son's one word will give you liberty

L. Ern I know he would not do me so much
wrong

You think, because I'm white with age, I mourn
Such hardships. See, my hand's as firm and steady
As when I broke my first spear in the wars;
Alas! I am so glad, I cannot smile.

Guard. We sorrow thus to leave thee.

L. Ern. Sorrow! man,
It is a woman's game: I cannot play it.
Away, your whining but provokes my spleen.

*[As the guards are retiring he bursts into a
furious fit and when he has left the stage he
stops short.]*

They're gone and cannot hear me. Now, then, now,
Eyes weep away my life, heart, if thou hast
A pulse to strain, break, break, oh break!

Enter HESPERUS

My son,
Come here, I'll tell thee all they've done to me,
How they have scoffed and spurned me, thrown me
here

In wretched loneliness.

Hesp. Alas! my father.

L. Ern. Oh set me free, I cannot bear this air.
If thou dost recollect those fearful hours,
When I kept watch beside my precious boy,

And saw the day but on his pale, dear face ;
If thou didst think me, in my gentlest moods,
Patient and mild, and even somewhat kind ;
Oh give me back the pity that I lent,
Pretend at least to love and comfort me.

Hesp. Speak not so harshly ; I'm not rich enough
To pay one quarter of the dues of love,
Yet something I would do. Show me the way,
I will revenge thee well.

L. Ern. But whilst thou'rt gone,
The dread diseases of the place will come
And kill me wretchedly. No, I'll be free.

Hesp. Aye, that thou shalt. I'll do ; what will I
not ?
I'll get together all the world's true hearts,
And if they're few, there's spirit in my breast
Enough to animate a thousand dead

L. Ern. My son
We need not this , a word of thine will serve.

Hesp. Were it my soul's last sigh I'd give it thee.

L. Ern. Marry.

Hesp. I—cannot.

L. Ern. But thou dost not know
Thy best-loved woos thee. Oft I've stood unseen,
In some of those sweet evenings you remember,
Watching your innocent and beauteous play
(More innocent because you thought it secret,
More beautiful because so innocent) ;
Oh ! then I knew how blessed a thing I was
To have a son so worthy of Olivia.

Hesp. Olivia !

L. Ern. Blush not, though I name your mistress ;
You soon shall wed her.

Hesp. I will wed the plague,
I would not grudge my life, for that's a thing,
A misery, thou gavest me : but to wed
Olivia ; there's damnation in the thought.

L. Ern. Come, speak to him my chains, for ye've
a voice

To conquer every heart that's not your kin !
Oh ! that ye were my son, for then at least
He would be with me. How I loved him once !
Aye, when I thought him good, but now—Nay, still
He must be good, and I I have been harsh
I feel I have not prized him at his worth
And yet I think it best—his life is over,
I could have sworn—indeed I could

Hesp. We shall live together

L. Ern. No, for I shall die ;

But that's no matter

Hesp. Bring the priest, the bride.

Quick, quick. These fetters have infected him
With slavery's sickness. Yet there is a secret,
'Twixt heaven and me, forbids it. Tell me, father ;
Were it not best for both to die at once ?

L. Ern. Die ! Thou hast spoke a word, that makes
my heart

Grow sick and wither. Thou hast palsied me
To death. Have thou to wed some worthier maid ;
Know that thy father chose this sad seclusion,
(Ye rebel lips, why do you call it sad ?)
Should I die soon, think not that sorrow caused it,
But, if you recollect my name, bestow it
Upon your best-loved child, and when you give him
His Grandsire's blessing, add not that he perished
A wretched prisoner.

Hesp. Stop, or I am made

I know not what—perhaps a villain. Curse me
Oh if you love me, curse.

L. Ern. Aye, thou shalt hear

A father's curse, if fate hath put a moment
Of pain into thy life ; a sigh, a word,
A dream of woe ; be it transferred to mine ;
And for thy days ; oh ! never may a thought

Of others' sorrow, even of old Ernest's,
Darken their calm, uninterrupted bliss ;
And be thy end—oh ! any thing but mine.

Hesp. Guilt, thou art sanctified in such a cause ;
Guards ; (*they enter*) I am ready. Let me say't so
low,

So quickly that it may escape the ear
Of watchful angels ; I will do it all.

L. Ern. There's nought to do ; I've learned to love
this solitude.

Farewell, my son. Nay, never heed the fetters ;
We can make shift to embrace.

Hesp. Lead him to freedom,
And tell your lord I will not—that's I will.

[*Exeunt LORD ERNEST and guards.*]

Here, fellow ; put your hand upon my mouth
Till they are out of hearing. Leave me now.
No, stay ; come near me, nearer yet Now fix
The close attention of your eyes on mine.

Guard. My lord !

Hesp. See'st thou not death in them ?

Guard. Forbid it, fate.

Hesp. Away ! ill-omened hound ;
I'll be a ghost and play about the graves,
For ghosts can never wed. [*Exit guard.*]
There, there they go, my hopes, my youthful
hopes,

Like ingrate flatterers. What have I to do
With life ? Ye sickly stars, that look with pity
On this cursed head, be kind and tell the lightning
To scathe me to a cinder ; or if that
Be too much blessing for a child of sin,
But strike me mad, I do not ask for more.
Come from your icy caves, ye howling winds,
Clad in your gloomy panoply of clouds,
And call into your cars, as ye pass o'er
The distant quarters of this tortured world,

LORD

Every disease of every clime
 Here shall they banquet on a willing victim,
 Or with one general ague shake the earth,
 The pillars of the sky dissolve and burst,
 And let the ebon-tiled roof of night
 Come tumbling in upon the doomed world—
 Deaf are they still? then death is all a fable,
 A pious lie to make man lick his chops
 And look for freedoms coming through his gate
 Why are we not into this whirling globe
 Still to be rack'd while traitorous Hope stands by,
 And heals the wounds that they may gape again?
 Aye, to this end the earth is made a ball,
 Else crawling to the brink despair would plunge
 Into the infinite eternal air
 And leave its sorrows and its sins behind
 Since death will not, come sleep, thou kindred power,
 Lock up my senses with thy leaden key,
 And darken every crevice that admits
 Light life and misery if thou canst, for ever. [Exit.

ACT II

SCENE I. *A chamber in ORLANDO's palace**Enter ORLANDO to his boy asleep*

Orl. Boy! he is asleep;
 O innocence, how fairly dost thou head
 This pure, first page of man—Peace to thy slumbers;
 Sleep, for thy dreams are 'midst the seraphs' harps,
 Thy thoughts beneath the wings of holiness,
 Thine eyes in Paradise
 The day may come (if haply gentle death
 Say not amen to thy short prayer of being,
 And lap thee in the bosom of the blest,)

I weep to think on, when the guilty world
Shall, like a friend, be waiting at thy couch,
And call thee up on ev'ry dawn of crime.

Boy. (*Awaking*) Dear master, didst thou call? I
will not be

A second time so slothful.

Orl. Sleep, my boy,
Thy task is light and joyous, to be good.

Boy. Oh! if I must be good, then give me money,
I pray thee, give me some, and you shall find
I'll buy up every tear, and make them scarce
Than diamonds.

Orl. Beautiful pity, thou shalt have enough;
But you must give me your last song.

Boy. Nay sir;
You're wont to say my rhymes are fit for girls,
And lovesick idiots; I have none you praise
Full of the heat of battle and the chase.

Orl. Sing what you will, I'll like it.

Song

A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
And he will out a-hawking go.
His shafts are light as beauty's sighs,
And bright as midnight's brightest eyes,
And round his starry way
The swan-winged horses of the skies,
With summer's music in their manes,
Curve their fair necks to zephyr's reins,
And urge their graceful play.

A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
And he will out a-hawking go.
The sparrows flutter round his wrist,

The feathery thieves that Venus kissed
 And taught their morning song,
 The linnets seek the airy list,
 And swallows too, small pets of Spring,
 Beat back the gale with swifter wing,
 And dart and wheel along.

A ho ! A ho !
 Love's horn doth blow
 And he will out a-braking go
 Now woe to every gnat that skips
 To nitch the fruit of ladies' lips,
 His felon blood is shed ;
 And woe to flies, whose airy slips
 On beauty cast their anchoring bite,
 And bandit wasp, that naughty wight,
 Whose sting is slaughter-red.

Orl. Who is thy poet, boy ?

Boy. I must not tell.

Orl. Then I will chide thee for him Who first drew
 Love as a blindfold imp in earthen dwarf
 And armed him with blunt darts : His soul was kin
 To the rough wind that dwells in the icy north,
 The dead, cold pedant, who thus dared confine
 The universe's soul, for that is Love.
 'Tis he that acts the nightingale, the thrush,
 And all the living musics, he it is
 That gives the lute, the harp, and tabor speech,
 That flutters ou melodious wings and strikes
 The mute and viewless lyres of sunny strings
 Borne by the minstrel gales, mimicking vainly
 The timid voice, that sent him to my breast,
 That voice the wind hath treasured and doth use
 When he bids roses open and be sweet.

Boy. Now I could guess.

Orl. What, little curious one ?

Go and get her then. {Exeunt.

SCENE II

The return of Mother Len.

LENOX and I.

Flor. My mother, what's the matter? You ought to check.

These wayward humours. Oh, I know too well
I'm a poor, foolish, discontented child;
My heart doth sink when Hesperus is gone,
And leaves me nought but fears. Forgive me then
If I have vexed you.

Len. Dear and gentle soul
You ne'er offended me. But what you said
You had offended. When I look on thee
If there's a thought that moistens in my eye,
Fear, that thy husband cannot match such goodness,
Is looking out there.

Flor. Fears of Hesperus!
That's not my mother's thought, cast it away.
He is the glass of all good qualities,
And what's a little virtue in all others
Looks into him and sees itself a giant;
He is a nosegay of the sweets of man,
A dictionary of superlatives;

He walks about, a music among discords,
 A star in night, a prayer 'midst madmen's curses ;
 And if mankind, as I do think, were made
 To bear the fruit of him, and him alone,
 It was a glorious destiny.

Len He is a goodly man, and yet they say
 Strange passions sleep with in him — There's Orlando,
 A gentle suitor, Floribel loves him.
 He had not that I have seen in him
 What it's too late to tell you.

Flor Mother, your Orlando
 Is a good gentleman — I wish him well,
 But to my husband — We'll not talk of him.
 Yet you shall see I can be cool sometimes
 When Hesperus deserves it, as he does
 Even now for his delay.

Len He's here — I'll leave you,
 You shall not quarrel with him for my pleasure.

[*Exit.*

Enter HESPERUS

Hesp Good morning, Floribel

Flor Fair noon to Hesperus, I knew a youth
 In days of yore, would quarrel with the lark,
 If with its joyous matins it foreran
 His early pipe beneath his mistress' window ;
 Those days are passed ; alas ! for gallantry.

Hesp Floribel !

Flor. Sir, d'ye know the gentleman ?
 Give him my benison and bid him sleep
 Another hour, there's one that does not miss him.

Hesp. Lady, I came to talk of other things,
 To tell you all my secrets — must I wait
 Until it fits your humour ?

Flor. As you please !
 (The worst of three bad suitors, and his name
 Began with an H)

Hesp. Good morrow then, again.

Flor. Heaven help you, sir,
And so adieu.

Hesp. Madam, you spoke, you said it, Floribel :
I never thought mine curs a curse before.
Did I not love thee ? Say, have I not been
The kindest ?

Flor. Yes indeed thou *hast* been. Now
A month is over. What would I not give
For those four sevens of days ? But I have lived them,
And that's a bliss. You speak as if I'd lost
The little love you gave your poor one then.

Hesp. And you as if you cared not for the loss.
Oh Floribel, you'll make me curse the chance
That fashioned this sad clay and made it man,
It had been happier as the senseless tree
That canopies your sleep But Hesperus,
He's but the burthen of a scornful song
Of coquetry, beware, that song may end
In a death-groan.

FLORIBEL *sings*

The knight he left the maid,
That knight of fickleness,
Her's was the blame he said,
And his the deep distress.

If you are weary of poor Floribel,
Pray be not troubled ; she can do without thee.
Oh Hesperus, come hither, I must weep ;
Say you will love me still, and I'll believe it,
When I forget my folly.

Hesp. Dear, I do ;
By the bright fountains of those tears I do.

Flor. You don't despise me much ? May I look up
And meet no frown ?

Hesp. Try to look through my breast,

And see my truth. But, oh ! my Floribel,
 Take heed how thou dost look unkindly on me,
 For greybeards have been kneeling, and with prayers
 Trying to pluck thee from my bosom ; fairness,
 And innocence, and duty league against thee.
 Then do't not, sweet, again, for sometimes strange
 And horrid thoughts bring whispers to my soul,
 They shall not harm thee girl. I meant indeed,
 Hard hearted as I was to have told thee
 A tale of terror that I had known of,
 Why, let the old man say

Flor. Oh no, no, no ;
 We will let no one die, but cherish them
 With love like ours, and they will soon be well ;
 Stay and I'll tell you how to save him.

Hesp. Thou !
 Excellent loveliness,
 Thou save him ! But I must be gone, or else
 Those looks will lure a secret from my breast,
 That threatens both. I'll home and think of something.
 Meet me to-morrow in the sweet-briar thicket,
 When twilight fades to evening. I'm in haste [*Exit.*]

Flor. My better thoughts go with thee. It is true
 He hath too much of human passion in him,
 But I will hold him dear, and, if again
 My wicked senses grow so cruel quick
 As to suspect his kindness, I'll be sure
 My eyes have got false sight, my ears false hearing,
 And my whole mind's become a rebel traitress.

Enter ORLANDO'S boy

Boy. These for fair Floribel, you are the one
 I hear my master talk of, surely, lady,
 And yet his words are feeble shadows
 Of such pure beauty. Please you read his thoughts.
Flor. You hold a courtly language for such years ;

But be you 'ware of compliment akin
To falsehood.

[*Reads. From the sad-souled ORLANDO.*

Fie sir ; your gifts are dangerous Look you here,
As I disperse the wicked syllables
Met in this little parliament of words,
And give them to the light and careless winds,
So do I bid him tear the thoughts of me
Out of his breast, and hold me as a thing
Further from him than misery.

Boy. It is ungently done,—nay, I must say so,—
To hurt the generous blossoms of his love ;
I am sorry that a hand so beautiful
Can be so fell.

Flor. Boy, thou dost not know
The fears that urge me. Had my Hesperus
Seen these or thee, I know not what of ill
Must have befallen us

Boy. Lady, you must not weep ;
I have a ballad which my master hears
In his sad moods ; it has the art to raise
A dimple on the cheek of moody care.
I'll sing it you.

Flor. Young one, I almost love thee.

[*Kisses him.*

Enter HESPERUS

Hesp. Why Floribel—Girl ! Painted fickleness !
Madam, I'm rude ; but Hesperus did not think
He could intrude on—what was Floribel.

Flor. Nor doth he ever.

Hesp. If he does not now,
Be sure he won't again. Oh girl, girl, girl,
Thou'st killed my heart : I thought thee once, good fool,
I will not tell thee what, thou'lt laugh at me.

Flor. By heaven !

Hesp. Don't name it. do not be forsworn
But why should I regard thy words or oaths?

Flor. Hesperus, Hesperus!

Hesp. Nay, I should be sorry
To cheat the longing boy; he fills thine arms
Excellent well, believe it. Urchin, seek me
When that mis-featured butter-print of thine
Is bearded, I will trim thee with a sword

Flor. Hesperus, thou art

Hesp. Better than thou art. I am cherous. Aye, 'twas
well

To tear the letters, there might be a husband;
No, he shall be no more.

Flor. But listen to me,
These lips that thou hast kissed—

Hesp. I, and a thousand,
Men, boys and monsters.

Flor. And these arms thou callest
Beloved and fair—

Hesp. And fickle and adulterous.
Enough of woe in love your paramour
Is troublesome, such talkable and imp
Raise her, she loves your silken larks, I gave you
All that is mine of her.

Flor. Oh! save me, dearest.

Hesp. She speaks to you, sir. I beseech you both,
Go on, don't heed me: oh, I joy to see
Your love-tricks.

Flor. By the solemn spousal tie,
I charge you, hear me.

Hesp. Lady, I will tell you,
Though it is needless, what I meant to say,
And leave you then for ever. You remember
A loving dupe you entertained some while,
One Hesperus you must oh! that you ever
Forgot him. Well, I will be brief. He gave you,
And bade you keep it as you would his love,

A little bird, a sweet red-bosomed creature,
To toy with in his absence : (then he knew not
You had another playmate for your chamber.)
This bird, it was a creature that I loved,
Yet it did not deceive me ; I have thought
There was a spirit in it—never mind ;
I dreamed I spoke to one, who valued me
And my poor feelings. Unto you I gave it,
And you have lost it ; in my way I passed
Its silent wicker house. Now I have spoken,
Perhaps was tedious : but I'm still so foolish,
That I will say, good-bye.

Flor. Oh stay, my love.

Hesp. He will, the lovely cub.

Flor. Thee, thee I mean.

Hesp. I am no lover, I. Madam, we're strangers ;
And yet I knew some while ago a form
Like thine, as fair, as delicate. Oh heaven !
To think of it. But she was innocent,
Innocent, innocent.

Flor. The angels know
I am as spotless.

Hesp. Go to them ; I'm not one ;
Perhaps this pap-faced chit may be. Nay, girl,
Wet not thy cheeks : I've seen a player weep.
I will not go, for if I do, the flock
Of her warm suitors will be toying here ;
Yet I'll not stay ; for she will melt and pray
Till I'm a fool again. Strain not your lungs
With laughter when I'm gone. Oh woman, woman.
[Exit.]

Flor. Poor boy, thou hast undone me : lead me in.
[Exit.]

SCENE III

An apartment in ORLANDO'S palace

Enter HESPERUS

Hesp. Oh thou sad self, thou wretched half of
Hesperus,

Thou'rt lost indeed, there's nought of life about thee,
But the one thought that thou hast saved a father.
Now I do think that if I meet a goodness
In woman's shape a fair one I'd not ask,
But something that would soothe and comfort me,
I could almost love her.

Enter ORLANDO and OLIVIA

Orl. My brother Hesperus, our poor home is honoured
By thy loved father's presence and thine own.
Here is a living welcome, prithee know her ;
Olivia

Hesp. Blessedness you should have said
A music waits upon her every step.
That my heart leaps to

Oliv. Courtly, sir, and kind.

Hesp. And fond I would have made it. Oh fair lady,
A smile of thine will give me health again.

Orl. Sister, thou needst no witness to these blushes.
School her, sir, in the arts of compliment,
You'll find her an apt learner. *[Exit.*

Oliv. Had I a right to pray to you, I would.

Hesp. Pray, lady ? Didst thou ever see the goddess
Step from her dignity of stone, or leave
The hallow'd picture in its tinted stole,
And crouch unto her suppliant ? Oh no ;
If there is aught so poor a thing as I
Can please you with, command it and you bless me.

Oliv. Try, I beseech thee, try not to detest,

Oliv. 'Tis sweeter than a virtue, I must love thee.

Hesp. And love me truly ?

Oliv.

Heaven grant me life

To prove it.

Hesp. Then thou shalt be mine own ; but not till death .

We'll let this life burn out no matter how

Though every sand be moist with both our tears

And every day be rain-veiled in our eyes

Though thou shouldst vex us with a cruel avarice,

And I grow hoarse with a daubed deceit,

A smiling treachery in woman's form

Sad to the soul heart-cankered and forlorn ;

No matter, all no matter

Though madness rule our thoughts despair our hearts,

And misery live with us, and misery talk

Our guest all day, our bed-fellow all night ,

No matter, all no matter.

For when our souls are born then will we wed ;

Our dust shall mix and grow into one stalk,

Our breaths shall make one perfume in one bud,

Our blushes meet each other in a rose

Our sweeter voices swell some sky-bird's throat

With the same warbling, dwell in some soft pipe

Or bubble up along some sainted spring's

Musical course, and in the mountain trees

Slumber our deeper tones, by tempests waked :

We will be music, spring, and all fair things,

The while our spirits make a sweeter union

Than melody and perfume in the air

Wait then, if thou dost love me

Oliv.

Be it so .

You'll let me pray for death if it will bring

Such joys as these ? Though once I thought to live

A happy bride , but I must learn new feelings.

Hesp. New feelings ! Aye to watch the lagging clock

And bless each moment as it parts from thee,

To court the blighting grasp of tardy age,
And search thy forehead for a silver tress
As for a most prized jewel.

Oliv. I cannot think
Of that cold bed diseases make for us,
That earthy sleep ; oh ! 'tis a dreadful thing.

Hesp. The very air,
I thank it, (the same wild and busy air,
That numbers every syllable I speak,
In the same instant my lips shape its sound,
With the first lisps of him, who died before
The world began its story) ; steals away
A little from my being ;
And at each slightest tremor of a leaf
My hearse moves one step nearer. Joy, my love !
We're nearer to our bridal sheets of lead
Than when your brother left us here just now,
By twenty minutes' talk.

Oliv. It is not good
Thus to spurn life, the precious gift of heaven.
And watch the coming light of dissolution
With such a desperate hope. Can we not love
In secret, and be happy in our thoughts,
Till in devotion's train, th' appointed hour
Lead us, with solemnly rejoicing hearts,
Unto our blessed end ?

Hesp. End ! thou sayest.
And do those cherries ripen for the worms,
Those blue enchantments beam to light the tomb ?
Was that articulate harmony (Love uses
Because he seems both Love and Innocence
When he sings to it), that summer of sweet breath,
Created but to perish and so make
The deads' home loveliest ?

Oliv. But what's to live without my Hesperus ?
A life of dying. 'Tis to die each moment
In every several sense. To look despair,

Feel, taste, breathe, eat, be conscious of despair.
No, I'll be nothing rather.

Hesp. Nothing but mine !
Thou flower of love, I'll wear thee in my bosom ;
With thee the wrath of man will be no wrath,
Conscience and agony will smile like pleasure,
And sad remembrance lose its gloomy self
In rapturous expectation

Oliv. Let me look on thee ,
Pray pardon me man eyes are very fools.

Hesp. Jewels of pity azure stars of beauty
Which lost affection steers by , could I think
To dim your light with sorrow ? Pardon me,
And I will serve you ever. Sweet, go in ;
Somewhat I have to think on. [Exit OLIVIA

Floribel,

I would not have thee cross my path to-night ,
There is an indistinct dread purpose forming,
Something, whose depth of wickedness appears
Hideous, incalculable, but inevitable ;
Now it draws nearer and I do not shudder ,
Avaunt ! haunt me no more , I dread it not,
But almost—hence ! I must not be alone. [Exit.

SCENE IV

A tapestried chamber in the same

HESPERUS discovered in a disturbed slumber

Hesp. (Starting from his couch) Who speaks ?
Who whispers there ? A light ! a light !
I'll search the room, something hath called me thrice,
With a low muttering voice of toadish hisses,
And thrice I slept again. But still it came
Nearer and nearer, plucked my mantle from me,

And made mine heart an ear, in which it poured
Its loathed enticing courtship. Ho! a light.

Enter attendant with a torch

Thou drowsy snail, thy footsteps are asleep,
Hold up the torch.

Attend. My lord, you are disturbed.
Have you seen aught?

Hesp. I lay upon my bed,
And something in the air, out-jetting night,
Converting feeling to intenser vision,
Featured its ghastly self upon my soul
Deeper than sight.

Attend. This is Delusion surely;
She's busy with men's thoughts at all night hours,
And to the waking subtle apprehension
The darkling chamber's still and sleepy air
Hath breath and motion oft.

Hesp. Lift up the hangings, mark the doors, the
corners;
Seest nothing yet? No face of fiendlike mirth,
More frightful than the fixed and doggish grin
Of a dead madman?

Attend. Nought I see, my lord,
Save the long, varied crowd of warlike shapes
Set in the stitched picture

Hesp. Heard ye then?
There was a sound, as though some marble tongue
Moved on its rusty hinge, syllabing harshly
The hoarse death-rattle into speech.

Attend. The wind is high, and through the silent rooms
Murmurs his burthen, to an heedless ear
Almost articulate.

Hesp. Thou sleepest, fool;
A voice has been at my bedside to-night,
Its breath is burning on my forehead still,
Still o'er my brain, its accents, wildly sweet,

Hover and fall. Away and dream again
I'll watch myself.

*[He takes the torch and turns to the hangings.
Exit attendant.]*

Aye, these are living colours,
Those cheeks have worn their youth these hundred
years.

Those flowers are verily in the warmest spring
And blooming still.

While she lies here so peacefully,
Sleeps and dreams so sweetly, it's a goodly state,
And then as now I wish had taken her bed
In the stone dormitory.

(Blindfold moth,
Thou shalt not burn thy life, there I have saved thee;
If thou art grateful, mingle with the air
That feeds the lips of her I thought of once,
Choak her, moth, choak her. I could be content,
If she were safe in heaven.)

Yon stout dagger
Is fairly fashioned for a blade of stitches,
And shines methinks most grimly, well thou art
An useful tool sometimes thy tooth works quickly,
And, if thou gnawest a secret from the heart,
Thou tellest it not again: ha! the feigned steel
Doth blush and steam. There is a snuff of blood.

[Grasps his dagger convulsively.]
Who placed this iron asp in my hand?
Speak! who is at my ear?

[He turns, and addresses his shadow.]

I know thee now,
I know the hideous laughter of thy face
'Tis Mahce' eldest imp, the heir of hell,
Red-handed Murther. Slow it whispers me,
Coaxingly with its serpent voice. Well sung,
Syren of Acheron!

I'll not look on thee;

Why does thy frantic weapon dig the air
 With such most frightful vehemence? Back, back,
 Tell the dark grave I will not give it food.
 Back to thy home of night. What! playest thou still?
 Then thus I banish thee. Out, treacherous torch,
 Sure thou wert kindled in infernal floods,
 Or thy bright eye would blind at sights like this.

[Dashes the torch on the ground.]

Tempt me no more; I tell thee, Floribel
 Shall never bleed. I pray thee, guilty word,
 Tempt me no more. *[Wraps himself in his mantle.]*
 I'm deaf, my ears are safe.

I do not hear thee woo me to the deed;
 Thou tellest to one without auricular sense
 Olivia's beauties and that bad one's faults
 Oh! bring me thoughts of pity Come come, come,
 Or I am lost.

Bad goblin, must I fly thee? *[Exit.]*

SCENE V

A hall in the same

LORD ERNEST, ORLANDO, CLAUDIO, OLIVIA

L. Ern. Saw ye my son?

Oliv. Some hours ago we parted,
 And he was strange, though gentle, in his talk.

Orl. I passed him in the garden, just at twilight;
 He stood with eyes wide open, but their sense
 Dreamed, in dumb parley with some fancied thing;
 For his lips moved, and he did walk and gaze,
 Now frown most mournfully, now smile most madly,
 And weep, and laugh, groan deep and gnash his teeth,
 And now stand still with such a countenance,
 As does the marble sorrow o'er a tomb.

At last he tore his feet, as they were roots,
Up from the earth, and sighed like one o'ercome ;
Then, with his fingers thrust upon his eyes
And dashed unclosed away, he seemed to snatch
Some loathly object out of them, and leapt
Into the thicket's gloom.

L. Ern. Who saw him since ?

Claudio In most distempered wildness he hath left
His chamber now

L. Ern. Go seek him, every one
I do beseech you 'tis a fearful period,
I know too truly On his nurse's breast,
Some twenty years ago, he lay and mused
Upon her singing and bright merry lips ;
A viewless bolt dropped on her, and she died
Most hideously ; close in the infant's face
Looked all the horrors of her bursting eyes ;
And, as the months bring round that black remem-
brance,
His brain unsettles bloody thoughts oppress
And call him from his bed Search all the darkness,
Each one a several way, dear daughter, in [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI

A suicide's grave

ORLANDO and CLAUDIO

Claudio. There is a plague in this night's breath, Or-
lando

The dews fall black and blustering from yon cloud
Anchored above us, dost thou mark how all
The smokes of heaven avoid it and crowd on
Far from its fatal darkness ? Some men say

That the great king of evil sends his spirits
In such a winged car, to stir ill mind,
Up to an act of death

Orl. We may not thank so,
For there's a temptation in heed of evil,
Oft pondered over, that it is as to them,
And then commit. Beware of the poison soul:
'Tis but one devil ever tempts a man,
And his name's *Self*. Know'st thou these raveling
hemlocks?

Clau. I've seen the ugly reptiles batten on
them,
While healthy creatures sicken at the sight.

Orl. Five months ago they were an human heart,
Peating in Hugo's breast. A paragon
Here sleeps, self-slaughtered. I was a token of grace,
In his early infancy; I've known him out
Outstep his pathway that he might not crush
The least small reptile. But there is a time
When goodness sleeps, it came, and vice was grafted
On his young thoughts, and grew, and flourished there:
Envenomed passions clustered round that prop;
A double fruit they bore; a double fruit of death.

Clau. Enough, Orlando,
The imps of darkness listen while we tell
A dead man's crimes. Even now I hear a stir,
As if the buried turned them in their shrouds
For mere unquiet. Home it is the time
When the hoarse fowl, the carrier-bird of woe,
Brings fevers from the moon, and maddening dreams;
The hour's unholy, and who hath not sent
After the parted sun his orisons,
Falls 'neath the sway of evil.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter HESPERUS

Hesp. Hail, shrine of blood, in double shadows
veiled.

Where the Tartarian blossoms shed their poison
And load the air with wicked impulses ,
Hail, leafless shade, hallowed to sacrilege,
Altar of death ! Where is thy deity ?
With him I come to covenant, and thou,
Dark power, that sittest in the chair of night,
Searching the clouds for tempests with thy brand,
Proxy of Hades , list and be my witness
And bid your phantoms all at once speak
What, if they but report in sleeping ears
Will strike on the ether dead and mad his soul ,)
Spread with red and black and thick their cloudy wings,
Lest the appalled sky do pale to-day.
Eternal people of the lower world,
Ye citizens of Hades' capitol,
That by the rivers of remorseful tears
Sit and despair for ever ;
Ye negro brothers of the deadly winds,
Ye elder souls of night, ye mighty sins,
Sceptred damnations, how may man invoke
Your darkling glories ? Teach my eager soul
Fit language for your ears — Ye that have power
O'er births and swoons and deaths, the soul's attendants
(Wont to convey her from her human home
Beyond existence, to the past or future,
To lead her through the starry-blossomed meads,
Where the young hours of morning by the lark
With earthly airs are nourished, through the groves
Of silent gloom, beneath whose breathless shades
The thousand children of Calamity
Play murderously with men's hearts .) Oh pause,
Your universal occupations leave,
Lay down awhile the infant miseries,
That, to the empty and untenanted clay,
Ye carry from the country of the unborn ;
And grant the summoned soul one moment more
To linger on the threshold of its flesh ;

For I would task you.

Bear this breath of mine,
This inner Hesperus away, and bring
Another guest to its deserted home ;
The mind of him whose dust is on my feet,
And let his daring spirit inhabit there
But for a passing day.

'Tis here. A wind
Is rushing through my veins, and I become
As a running water.
I see a shadowy image of myself,
Yet not my perfect self, a brother self,
That steps into my bosom. Am I born
Newly, or newly dead ? I'll think a little.
Have I e'er lived before, or thought or acted ?
Why no ; it was the morning doze of being.
I slept content with dreams , but now I wake
And find it noon, a time for stirring deeds.
Yes, this is life that trembles in my veins,
Yes, this is courage warms my heart's full tide :
Hesperus is a man, a demon-man,
And there's a thing he lives for, shall amaze
The emulous bad powers.

Lead me on,
Mysterious guide, companion wickedness ,
Olivia calls me forward and, to reach her,
What if we tread upon a world of hearts ?
Come, ye ill blasts, ye killing visitants
Of sleeping men, wild creatures of the air,
We'll walk together ; come, ye beauteous snakes,
Ye lovely fanged monsters of the woods,
We'll grovel in the dust and ye shall hiss
Your tunes of murder to me. [*An ignis fatuus rises.*]

Lo, she's here
To light our sports, the Hebe of the dead,
Alecto, 'mid her nest of living hair
Bearing a star of Tartarus. Lead on.

[*Exit.*]

For if he sees not, nor doth hear, he'll know
The gentle feel of his Olivia's tears

Clau. Sweet sir, look on her.

Orl. Brother !

Olv. Husband !

L. Ern. Son !

Kind heaven, let him hear, though death should call
him

[Pause a clock strikes.]

Hesp. The hour is come [Exit.]

SCENE II

A room in MORDRED'S cottage

FLORIBEL alone

Flor. And must I wake again ? Oh come to me,
Thou that with dew-cold fingers softly closest
The wearied eve, thou sweet, thou gentle power,
Soother of woe sole friend of the oppressed,
I long to lay me on thy peaceful breast
But once I saw thee beautiful as moonlight
Upon a baby's lips, and thou didst kiss them,
Lingering and oft,
(As a wild bee doth kiss a rifled flower,
And clips its waist, and drops a little tear,
Remorsefully enamoured of his prey ;)
Come so to me, sweet death, and I will wreath thee
An amorous chaplet for thy paly brows ;
And, on an odoured bank of wan white buds,
In thy fair arms
I'll lie, and taste thy cool delicious breath,
And sleep, and sleep, and sleep.

Enter LENORA

Oh here, good mother,

We'll talk together.

Since the last mellow echo of his voice
Lent the air music ; is't not a sweet voice ?
What can you liken to it ?

Len. Pan's honeycomb
Of many vocal cells.

Flor. How dull you are ;
There's nought beneath the thunder-choir so grand ;
The wood-birds and the water-fels but mock him.
He said, dear mother, I should be his countess,
To-day he'd come to see me, but with day
I've laid my expectation in its grave.
Dost think he will deceive me ? Silly girl,
Querulous ingrate, why do I torment me ?
Sweet mother, comfort.

Len. Be you sure he'll come
With his whole princely train of friends and kindred,
And he will lift thee to his gorgeous car,
And place thee at his side, a happy wife.

Flor. Fie ! you cajole me, like a sulky child,
With gilded cars, but oh ! I wish 'twere here.
How gloomily the clouds look and the wind
Rattles among the brown leaves dolorously ;
He will be very chill, heap up the fire
Hush ! hark ! What's that ?

Len. Only your dear father
Heavily breathing in his sleep ; he'll wake
With his sad smile upon his patient face,
Looking so dear in sickness.

Flor. But 'twill cure him,
When he knows all and sees my bridegroom with me,
I know it will : and there's the horse's step,
I'll just run out, it is not cold at all.—

Len. Go, my love.
But you must come to ask your father's blessing,
And bring your Hesperus with you.

Flor. That I will. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III

[Enter Hunt.]

Enter Hunt, Hubert, and a Fisherman.

Hub. No answer to our shouts, but mocking echo?
Where are our fellow-hunters now?—What, they vanish!
Like mist before the sun, and left us here
Lost in the briny maze.

Hunt. Shaming on the rogues
For this their treatment. But look, up yonder, *Hubert*,
See what a mighty storm hanes right above us.

Hub. The day is in its shroud while yet an infant,
And Night with giant strides stalks over the world
Like a swart Cyclops, on its hideous front
One round, red, thunder-swollen eye—*Older*

Hunt. Now mercy save the poor stricken man,
Who 'mongst his shattered canvas sits aghast
On the last sinking plank alone, and sees
The congregated monsters of the deep
For his dead messmates warring all, save one
That leers upon him with a ravenous gaze,
And whets its iron tusks just at his feet
Yet little heeds his wile and to do so
That, or the thunder of the ocean tossed
Which Destiny commissions with his doom;
Where the wild waters rush against the sky,
Far o'er the desolate plain, his star of hope
In mockery gleams, while Death is at his side.

[*Lightning.*]

Hub. That flash hath rent the heavens; this way
for shelter.

Hunt. Some steps above there stands a noble oak,
That from the sun roofs ever-during night
With its thick woven firmament of leaves:
Thither betake we.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter FLORIBEL

Flor. Hence did I seem to hear a human voice,
 Yet there is nought, save a low moaning sound,
 As if the spirits of the earth and air
 Were holding sad and ominous discourse.
 And much I fear me I have lost my path,
 Oh how these brambles tear here 'twixt the willows;
 Ha! something stirs my silly trailing nurse
 Says that here is a way to the old castle here
 And 'tis in some dreadfully lonely place,
 There there is a rustling in the leaves.

Enter HESPERUS

'Tis he at last; why dost thou turn away
 And lock thy bosom from my first embrace?
 I am so tired and frightened; but thou'rt here,
 I knew thou wouldst be faithful to thy promise,
 And claim me openly. Speak, let me hear thy voice,
 Tell me the joyful news.

Hesp Ave, I am come
 In all my solemn pomp, Darkness and Fear,
 And the great Tempest in his midnight car,
 The sword of lightning girt across his thigh,
 And the whole dæmon brood of night, blind Fog
 And withering Blight, all these are my retainers;
 How not one smile for all this bravery?
 What think you of my minstrels, the hoarse winds,
 Thunder, and tuneful Discord? Hark, they play.
 Well piped, methinks; somewhat too rough, perhaps.

Flor. I know you practise on my silliness,
 Else I might well be scared. But leave this mirth,
 Or I must weep

Hesp 'Twill serve to fill the goblets
 For our carousal; but we loiter here,
 The bridemaids are without; well-picked thou'lt say,
 Wan ghosts of woe-begone, self-slaughtered damsels

In their best winding sheets ; start not, I bid them wipe
Their gory bosoms ; they'll look wondrous comely ;
Our link-boy, Will o' the Wisp, is waiting too
To light us to our grave—bridal I mean.

Flor. Ha ! how my veins are chilled—why, Hesperus !

Hesp. What hero of thy dreams art calling, girl ?
Look in my face—Is't mortal ? Dost thou think
The voice that calls thee is not of a mouth
Long choaked with dust ? What, though I have assumed

This garb of flesh, and with it the affections,
The thoughts of weakness and mortality ?
'Twas but for thee ; and now thou art my bride ;
Lift up thine eyes and smile—the bride of Death.

Flor. Hold, hold. My thoughts are 'wildered. Is
my fancy

The churlish framer of these fearful words,
Or do I live indeed to such a fate ?
Oh ! no, I recollect ; I have not waked
Since Hesperus left me in the twilight bower.

Hesp. Come, we'll to our chamber,
The cypress shade hangs o'er our stony couch,
A goodly canopy ; be mad and merry ;
There'll be a jovial feast among the worms.
Fiends, strew your fiercest fire about my heart, [*Aside.*
Or she will melt it.

Flor. Oh, that look of fury !
What's this about my eyes ? Ah ! deadly night
No light, no hope, no help.

Hesp. What ! Darest thou tremble
Under thy husband's arm, darest think of fear ?
Dost dread me, me ?

Flor. I know not what to dread,
Nor what to hope ; all's horrible and doubtful ;
And coldness creeps—

Hesp. She swoons, poor girl, she swoons.

And, treacherous dæmons, ye've allowed a drop
To linger in my eyes. Out, out forever.
I'm fierce again. Now shall I slay the victim
As she lies senseless ? ah ! she wakes ; cheer up,
'Twas but a jest.

Flor. A dread and cruel one.
But I'll forgive you, if you will be kind,
And yet 'twas frightful

Hesp. Why 'twere most unseemly
For one marked for the grave to laugh too loud.

Fla. Alas ! he raves again. Sweetest, what mean you
By these strange words ?

Hesp. What mean I ? Death and murder,
Darkness and misery. To thy prayers and shrift ;
Earth gives thee back ; thy God hath sent me for thee ;
Repent and die.

Flor. Oh, if thou wilt it, love,
If thou but speak it with thy natural voice,
And smile upon me ; I'll not think it pain,
But cheerfully I'll seek me out a grave,
And sleep as sweetly as on Hesperus' breast
He will not smile he will not listen to me
Why dost thou thrust thy fingers in thy bosom ?
Oh search it, search it ; see if there remain
One little remnant of thy former love,
To dry my tears with.

Hesp. Well, speak on ; and then,
When thou hast done thy tale, I will but kill thee.
Come tell me all my vows, how they are broken,
Say that my love was feigned, and black deceit ;
Pour out thy bitterest, till untamed wrath
Melt all his chains off with his fiery breath,
And rush a-hungering out

Flor. Oh piteous heavens !
I see it now, some wild and poisonous creature
Hath wounded him, and with contagious fang
Planted this fury in his veins. He hides

The mangled fingers ; dearest, trust them to me,
I'll suck the madness out of every pore,
So as I drink it boiling from thy wound
Death will be pleasant. Let me have the hand,
And I will treat it like another heart

Hesp.

Here 'tis then ,

[*Stabs her.*

Shall I thrust deeper yet ?

Flor.

Quite through my soul,—

That all my senses, deadened at the blow,
May never know the giver. Oh, my love,
Some spirit in thy sleep hath stolen thy body
And filled it to the brim with cruelty.
Farewell ! and may no busy deathful tongue
Whisper this horror in thy waking ears
Lest some dread desperate sorrow urge thy soul
To deeds of wickedness. Whose kiss is that ?
His lips are ice. Oh my love ! Hesperus,
Help !

[*Dies.*

Hesp. What a shriek was that ; it flew to heaven,
And hymning angels took it for their own.
Dead art thou, Floribel ; fair, painted earth,
And no warm breath shall ever more disport
Between those rubious lips : no, they have quitted
Life to the dregs, and found death at the bottom,
The sugar of the draught—All cold and still,
Her very tresses stiffen in the air.
Look, what a face . had our first mother worn
But half such beauty, when the serpent came,
His heart, all malice would have turned to love.
No hand but this, which I do think was once
Cain, the arch-murderer's, could have acted it.
And I must hide these sweets, not in my bosom ;
In the foul earth. She shudders at my grasp ;
Just so she laid her head across my bosom
When first—oh villain ! which way lies the grave ?

[*Exit.*

Enter HUBLERT and a huntsman

Hub. It is a fearful and tempestuous time :
The concave firmament, the angel's bridge
O'er the world's day and night, is visibly
Bowed down and bent beneath its load of thunder ;
And through the fiery fissures of the clouds
Glistens the warfare of armed elements,
Bellowing defiance in earth's stunned ear
And setting midnight on the throne of day

Hunts. The roar has ceased, the hush of intercalm
'Numbs with its leaden fingers Echo's lips,
And angry spirits in mad havoc pause,
Premeditating ruin in their silence.

Hub. Hard by should stand a lone and tattered shed,
Where some tired woodsman may by chance be
 stretched,

Watching his scanty food among the coals,
There may we chafe our drenched and chilly limbs.

Hunts. The forest has more tenants than I knew ;
Look underneath this branch, seest thou not yonder,
Amongst the bushwood and the briary weeds,
A man at work -

Hub. My life upon't some miser,
Who in the secret hour creeps to his hoard,
And, kneeling at the altar of his love,
Worships that yellow devil, gold.

Hunts. 'Tis buried ;
And now he stamps the sod down, that no light
May spy his mistress, with what a doleful look
He marks its grave, and backward walks away,
As if he left his all of sight behind.

Hub. Let us steal towards it, I would have a peep
Upon this hidden jewel. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter HESPERUS

Hesp. Shall I turn back and try to thrust my soul
In at her lips, and so re-animate

Oliv. Gentle maid,
I'll not be sad ; yet, little Violet,
How long I've worn thy beauty next my heart,
Aye, in my very thoughts, where thou hast shed
Perpetual summer - how long shared thy being :
Like two leaves of a bud, we've grown together,
And needs must bleed at parting

Ind. No, not so .
I am thy handmaid still - and when your lord
Is absent - as he will be - at the tourney,
The court - or camp - we'll drive the long hours on
With prattle as of old

Oliv. Thanks, I'll be cheerful ;
But joy's a plant the showers of many sorrows
Must water, ere it bloom. Good nurse, your pardon,
You've known me for a froward child before.

Nurse. Now, on the scanty remnant of my life,
Grief's an ill wedding garment ; if you'd put
One of your rosy smiles on, what a grace
You'd look and be - Why all these ohs and sobs
Are more like funeral noises.

Oliv. 'Troth they are,
And 'tis the funeral of that Olivia
You nursed and knew , an hour and she's no more,
No more the mistress of her own resolves,
The free partaker of earth's airs and pleasures ;
My very love, the poorest gift I have
(Which, light as 'tis, I thought you all did prize),
Is not my own. We must be strangers, girls ;
Give me your hands and wishes

Nurse. There is one,
Old now, and withered, truly we might call it
Yours, and not mine , oft has it brought you food,
Led you, and served you , yet in gladness parts
To make way for a younger and a worthier.

Oliv. My kind old nurse ; nay, now you are forgetting
Your words of cheer , this hand shall never want

Aid while I live, your service will be needful ;
My house would seem a strange and dismal place
Without your pleasant looks.

Nurse. Well, my dear child,
I hope you'll give my arms a new Olivia ;
Blush not ; the old will talk.

Oliv. Whose hand is this
I know not from my own ? Young Violet's ?
My beauteous innocence, you must be with me
Oft, as you said : Go to, my nurse forbids
Our weeping.

Viol. Don't chide me then, Olivia,
I'm a sad fool, but do not chide.

Oliv. A gem
For Friendship's crown, each drop My loving maids,
To each a farewell that I cannot speak ,
All have my heart, and well can read its meaning.
Henceforth I'll look upon my maiden years
As lovely pastoral pictures ; all of you
Shall smile again 'neath Memory's wizard pencil ;
The natural beauties that we've marked together
Will look you back again ; the books we've loved
Will talk to me of your sweet-worded praises,
The air of our old haunts whisper your voices ,
Trust me, I'll not forget you

Attend. Dearest lady,
May all the blessings that rain down from heaven
Upon the marriage-bed, descend on yours ;
May many children, innocent and fair,
With soft embracements throng about your knees,
Domestic pleasures ever turn your hour-glass,
And, when the long sleep falls upon your eyes,
Content and holy Peace, the twins of Eden,
Draw round the curtain 'twixt you and the world,
And watch beside you all the dreary night.

SCENE V

A room in MORDRED'S cottage

Enter LENORA supporting MORDRED

Mor. Here let me rest, in my old oaken chair :
My limbs grow faint and yet, kind careful nurse,
Your smiles have chased away my pains

Len. Dear husband,
A thousand thanks for those delightful words ;
They bid me hope again and warm my heart.

Mor. It renovates the spirit thus to look,
With the clear eye of health and joyousness,
Upon the green creation. But I miss
A smile of hope, the copy of Lenora's,
That's wont to light my soul with its rich love ;
Where is my peach-cheeked girl, my Floribel ?

Len. She will be with us soon ; before you woke,
She went to ramble underneath the boughs,
And feed her forest-birds, each bower she knows
Of eglandine and hawthorn, now the air
Is calm, she will return

Mor. I hope she may,
Yet who could injure such a holy thing ?
The frenzied tempest's self, had it a will,
Would leave her path secure. My dear Lenora,
There is one thing I wish to see accomplished
Before I die.

Len. What is it, love ? And yet methinks 'twere fit
For me still to defer its execution
And cheat you into living to that end

Mor. Long have I prayed to see her beauty growing
Under some worthy husband's firm protection.

Len. What if she be already wedded ?

Mor. No,
That cannot be, she would have told unto me

The first emotions of her infant love ;
She never had a thought concealed from me,
Even her slightest. 'Tis impossible ;
And yet you look in earnest ; speak, and tell me
You only jest.

Len. I speak indeed the truth ;
Perhaps I was imprudent not to tell you,
But you were very ill, and, such the match,
You could not disapprove : Young Hesperus—

Mor. Lord Ernest's son !

Len. The same.

Mor. I'm satisfied,
My wish is all fulfilled. There's not a man
Beneath the sun more noble ; but his father
Was wont to be a stern imperious lord,
A scorner of the poor.

Len. He did not know it

Mor. He knew it not ! That was a sad omission,
Unworthy of a parent , we might rue it.

Len. This night our daughter's bridegroom
Comes, as his own to claim her, and, ere this,
Doubtless has told the love-tale to his father.

Mor. I wish him speedy, he shall find a welcome,
In the poor man's sole wealth, my hearty love
Hark ! There's a step

Len. 'Tis Hesperus' , I know it.

Enter the huntsman

Mor. Who comes, who is it ?

Len. One, whose visage wears
The darkest sadness ; such a man I'd choose
For the mute herald of disaster.

Hunts. Lady,
Would that my looks could mirror to your soul
The woe, each syllable of which in speaking
Tears through my heart. Alas ! your lovely daughter—

Len. What? Speak I pray thee. Has she met
with aught?

Mor. Bid me die, or my fears.

Enter HUBERT with the body of FLORIBEL.

Hunts Here's all that's left
Of nature's rarest work this lifeless all,
Oh! tall some strange, unheard-of punishment
On Hesperus' head

Mor. Hesperus, Hesperus; oh!
[*Falls back in his chair.*]

Hub Aye, 'twas his hand that wrought its passage
here,
And murdered love in its most sacred temple.
[*Lenora takes the body into her lap and sits
nursing it.*]

Hunts. Alas! he heeds not; he is with his daughter.
Look at this other.

Hub. Oh! I cannot bear it;
Leave her, a mother's agony is holy
As nature's mysteries

Hunts. We'll to the Duke,
And crush the viper in his nest, before
Report alarm him. Gently, gently tread
And wake not echo in this home of woe.
[*Exeunt HUBERT and the huntsman.*]

LENORA sings in a distracted manner.

Lullaby, lullaby, sweet be thy sleep!
Thou babe of my bosom, thou babe of my love;
Close, close to my heart, dear caresser, you creep,
And kiss the fond eyelid that watches above.

One touch of those warm lips and then to bed.
Where is my child? I held her in my arms,
Her heart was beating in my bosom. Ha!

It is not she that lies upon my breast,
It is not she that whispers in my ear,
It is not she that kisses my salt cheek ;
They've stolen her from my couch and left this change-
ling,

Men call Despair—and she it is I suckle.
I know her by her killing lips of snow,
Her watery eyeballs and her tear-swoll'n cheeks.
My Floribel ! oh they have ta'en her soul
To make a second spring of it, to keep
The jarring spheres in melody. Come, husband,
We'll wander up and down this wintry world,
And, if we see a sadder sight than this,
Or hear a tale, though false, of half such horror,
We'll closely hug our bosom-griefs in transport.
Why, husband ! You're asleep—you're deaf—you're
dead !

I have not eyes enough to weep for both,
But I'll go steal the sleeping world's, and beg
A little dew from every sipping worm
To wet my cheeks with.

[*Exit.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I. *An apartment in ORLANDO'S palace*

HESPERUS *alone*

Hesp. How now ? This quaint attire of countenance
(Well fitted by prim Conscience's old tailor,
Hypocrisy), sits rarely, and I'm here,
The affable, good bridegroom. Wickedness,
How easy is thy lesson ! Now I stand
Up to the throat in blood ; from Mercy's records
For evermore my guilty name is rased.
But yesterday, oh blessed yesterday,

I was a man ;
 And now—I start amazed at my self.
 This hand, aye thus it was I gave to Sin,
 His grasp hath blasted it ; 'twas made for kindness,
 For gentle salutation, to deal out
 Merciful alms, confirm the staff of age ;
 To reach the crust to want, the balm to sickness,
 And balsam wounds, a herb of charity
 Now the wild adder's sting the lightning's edge,
 Are blunt and tame as the tooth of a Psha !
 Why then, I never of the adler and the flash,
 So shall they cinge to me. A step ! In haste
 I've washed and thought me spotless. Yet I fear
 Mine eye is so familiarized with blood,
 It doth pass o'er and disregard the stains :
 That recks not. Sure I've brushed away those blushes,
 And shaken hesitation from my tongue.

Enter attendant

Menial, you're hasty in intruding thus.
 Your errand ?

Attend. Lady Olivia—

Hesp. Give me thine hand That name
 Makes him my friend, who speaks it. Say't again !
 Olivia, oh ! how each sweet syllable
 Trickles along the tongue, an honied drop
 Of harmony, Olivia. I'll give all
 The yellow wretchedness of human wealth
 Unto the snbtle artist, who shall teach
 A clock to tell the seconds by that word,
 So shall I drive these frightful thoughts away,
 And happiness—Do I look happy, sirrah ?
 It matters not. Speak on.

Attend. My lord, your bride—

Hesp. Well, sir, it was not I ; why lookest thou
 so ?

Beware. Why layest thine hand across thy breast?
Is there a wound on't? Say.

Attend.

A wound, my lord!

I understand not—

Hesp.

Fool, I know thou dost not.

(If they would find it out, why let them dig
To hell's foundations). What! Because I fold
Mine arms like any man unhurt, unhurting,
Must every slave suppose 'tis to conceal
Some fearful witness of a deed?

Attend.

I thought not

'Twould anger thee; forgive me.

Hesp.

Be it so;

It was too warmly said, for, as I trust,
You could not deem your master villain, never.
Yet say it were so, I but say suppose,
That I, whose clay is kneaded up with tears,
Had murdered, as you thought, some kindred creature;
Could not I wash the tokens of my guilt
From this outside, and show a hand as clean
As he who fingers first the air?

Attend.

You might,

Till heaven's justice blasted you, be hid;
But leave these strange and ugly arguments,
The very fear would scare me from your side;
So banish them.

Hesp.

Aye, they are strange indeed;

But mirth, believe me, mirth. Come, tell me now,
How sits this ring? Death! Are your eyes nailed there?
Ha! Does the ruby cast a sanguine shade
Across the veins?

Attend.

Nought, save the splendid gem,
Amazed my sight; that's all.

Hesp.

My friend, 'tis thine,

Too poor a recompense for the good tidings
Yonr tongue is laden with; now speak them out.

Attend. First let me bless you for your bounty, sir.

I came to call you to the wedding train,
Which waits without ; such smiles, on such rare faces,
Mine eyes have never seen : the bride is there ;
None but yourself is wanting to perfect
This sum of joy.

Hesp. Say I'll be there anon ;
And, mark me, on thy life forget each word
I just have spoken, blot them utterly
Out of thy mind , I can reward a service.
I like thee well, my trusty, pleasant friend ;
Nay, prithee go, there is no need of thanks.

[*Exit attendant.*]

I'll give that fellow's blab-tongue to the worms,
He's heard too much ; 'twere well to call him back,
And fasten down his memory with a dagger.
No, I'll not soil my skin again to-day ;
Down, Murder, down !
These untamed passions, that I keep about me,
Will thrive on nought save blood ; but they must fast,
And wear a specious tameness. My Olivia,
How my whole soul is thine, thine and the fiends'.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II

The interior of the DUKE'S palace

Enter the DUKE, HUBERT, and the huntsman

Duke. Your tale hath stunned me with its dreadful
import,
And turned my every faculty to wonder.

Hub. You cannot doubt, my liege ?

Duke Hubert, I'd give
The best part of my power for hope to whisper
A no to my conviction Devilish villain !

Hub. Sure all good angels looked another way,
When this foul deed was done.

Duke. All ancient cruelties
 Look pale to it, and merciful : henceforth
 They, that would christen human fiends, must write
 Hesperus, 'stead of Cain ; and chiding nurses,
 To still their peevish babes, shall offer them,
 Not to the wolves, but him, the fiercer beast.

Hub. Oh ! my good lord, even now my sight is
 dimmed
 With the salt gush, that came between my eyes
 And that which seared them : on her turfy couch,
 Like one just lulled into a heavy sleep,
 Smiling and calm she lay ; the breath
 Had not left fluttering up and down her bosom,
 That, all blood-dabbled and besprent with gore,
 Still held the guilty steel ; the name was on it
 Of the cursed owner.

Duke Go, trusty Hubert,
 Speed to Orlando's palace with my guard,
 And drag the murderer here, e'en now I'll judge him :
 Be diligent, put wings upon your feet ;
 Some vengeance will fall on us in the night,
 If he remain unsentenced. [Exeunt.

SCENE III

A banqueting hall

LORD ERNEST, ORLANDO, CLAUDIO, OLIVIA,
 VIOLETTA, lords, ladies, and attendants

L Ern. Sit here, my daughter ; sit and welcome, all ;
 You shall not say my Hesperus' nuptial night
 Lacks its due orgies.

Clau. Look upon the bride,
 How blushes open their evermeiled leaves
 On her fair features.

Hesp. The comfort of my presence ! Slave, thou mockest me.

Why dost thou thrust thy taper in my face ?
No price is set on't.

L. Ern. Hither, Hesperus ;
Thou dost not mark this company of kinsmen,
Met to congratulate you, and partake
Your gladness.

Hesp. Sirs, I thank you heartily.
(*Aside*) A curse upon the gaping saucy rabble ;
They must stare too.

L. Ern. Come, son, and sit beside me ;
They say you're ill, my boy.

Hesp. They say the truth.

L. Ern. What is your ailment ?

Hesp. Life. But here is one
Born to smile misery out of the world :
Look on me, my Olivia.

Oliv. Dearest Hesperus,
Be calmer, I beseech you ; all are here
My friends, and yours.

Hesp. No doubt. They drain our goblets.
A friend ! What is't ? A thing shall squeeze your hand,
Caress with fervent love your 'broidered sleeve,
And wring his mouth into a leering lie,
While his heart damns thee. One whose love's as deep
As your gold coffer Hast a wife ? They come ;
Buz, buz, lie, lie, the hungry meat-flies come,
' Dear lord, sweet lord, our only gentle lord !'
Aye, thus they sugar o'er the silent dagger,
And love, and love, till they've inhaled thy soul.
Oh ! when I call for friend, bring honest poison.
Put out the lights, I like the beams o' th' moon ;
And tell those revellers to tope in silence.

L. Ern. You would not overcast our best-meant mirth,
Bid us sit palled, like mourners at your bridal,
And hide in night our kindly countenances ?

Hesp. Aye, by my grave I would. There is on earth
One face alone, one heart, that Hesperus needs ;
'Twere better all the rest were not. Olivia,
I'll tell thee how we'll 'scape these prying eyes ;
We'll build a wall between us and the world,
And, in some summer wilderness of flowers,
As though but two hearts beat beneath the sun,
Consume our days of love

L. Ern. I pray you friends,
Excuse the wilful boy, his soul is wholly
Wrapt up in admiration of his bride
We'll have her health, come, fill your goblets round,
The bride, Olivia.

Clau. Happiness befall her,
May she ne'er feel a woe ; we drink to her. [*Music.*

Enter HUBERT

Hub. Hush, hush ; ye ill-timed sounds, let darkness
come,
And with her funeral trappings hang the walls,
Or twilight lend a weak and fitful gleam,
That you may watch each others' watery cheeks.
Oh ! ladies, deck your beauties with salt diamonds,
Wail with the midnight wind, and look as sad
As if ye heard the thunder-voice of doom.

L. Ern. What art thou, fearful man ?

Hub. Woe's harbinger ;
I come to bid you to a funeral ;
Prepare your eyes, for they must see dire vengeance
Fall on the neck of crime.

Hesp. Turn out that fellow ;
I know him for a crazy marvel-monger,
A long-faced gossip, with his batch of wonders :
And now he'll tell you the most terrible news,
How many owls and ravens screeched last night,
Or how some ghost has left his marble tomb
To blab a drunken lie.

Hub. I tell a fiend
His guilt is hid no more. Ho! there, the guard:

Enter guards

That is your prisoner.

Hesp. You tread a scorpion:
The first that stirs brings to my sword his heart;
Ye plunge into your graves. [*The guards seize him.*
Ah! Floribel;

Thou draggest my steel away, thou'st frozen me:
Girl, thou art pale.

L. Ern. How's this?
Ruffians, where do you bear my boy? Release him,
Or I'll—

Oliv. Oh! do not anger them. They're men
Who have sucked pity from their mothers' breasts,
They will not close their ears to my petition;
And, if they loose him, I will pray for them
While speech is mine.

L. Ern. Your swords, my friends, your swords.

Hub. Stand back, my lords; let the Duke's prisoner
pass.

L. Ern. The Duke! what Duke dare seize my
Hesperus?

My noble friends, my—sheath your coward swords,
And put your eyes upon the ground for fear
Your Jove, the Duke he said, hear ye no thunder?
But all the warriors of the universe

Shall not cow me: I'll free him; villains, back.

Hub. Oh! good old man; alas! he is a murderer.

L. Ern. A murderer! (*Drops his sword*) This is a
baby's arm.

Oliv. Save him, oh save him! I am very faint.

[*ORLANDO, VIOLETTA, and attendants, carry her out.*

Hesp. Hence with that voice! So shrieked—I must
not think.

Hub. Look to Lord Ernest. The Duke sits in council
Waiting your presence, lords. On, to the palace.

*[Exeunt CLAUDIO, HUBERT, HESPERUS, guards,
lords, and ladies. Manent LORD ERNEST and
attendants.]*

L. Ern. Where is he? What! Ye traitors, let
him pass,

Chained, guarded? By this light—gird on your swords.
My hairs are grey, but yet I've blood enough—
Did they not speak of crime? These limbs aren't mine,
But some consumptive girl's. Aye, it was murder!
I'll see the Duke—support me to the palace. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE IV

A street before the ducal palace

*Two guards attending the body of FLORIBEL
LENORA hanging over it*

1st Guard. 'Tis time to bear the body to the council:
The criminal is there already.

2nd Guard. Stay;
'Twere sacrilege to shake yon mourner off,
And she will perish in the wintry night,
If unattended—yet thus poor dumb witness
Is needful at the trial. While she sleeps
With careful hands convey her to the Duke's,
And bid the women tend her.

1st Guard. Soft! She breaks
Her trance, and rises like a new-born thing
Fresh from the realm of spirits.

2nd Guard Hush! she speaks.

Len. I dreamed, and in that visioned agony
'Twas whispered by strange voices, like the dead's,

I was the mother of this Floribel,
And still a wanderer upon man's earth ;
No, no, I am her ghost, shade of her essence,
Thrust into some strange shape of womanhood
Until the tomb is open. What are these ?
Good sir, have you a tear to throw away,
A little sigh to spare unto the wind ?
I've heard that there are hearts yet in the world,
Perhaps you have one.

1st Guard. Lady, for your sorrow

It aches most deeply.

Len. Prithee, look you here.

Cold, cold ; 'tis all in vain : those lustrous eyes
Will never beam again beneath the stars ,
Darkened for ever ; and those wan, dead lips .
They'll put her in the earth and let the world,
The pitiless bad world, tread o'er her beauty,
While I—ye airs of heaven, why will ye feed me ?
Why, ye officious ministers, bestow
The loathed blessing of a cursed existence ?
There's many a one now leans upon the cheek
Of his dead spouse, a-listening for her pulse,
And hears no motion but his bursting heart ;
Give him my life and bid him wipe his eyes
Look here, look here.

I've heard them call her flower , oh ' had she been
The frailest rose that whitens in the blast,
Thus bruised and riled by a ruffian hand,
I might have kept her living in my tears
A very little while, until I die ;
And then—now tell me thus and I will bless thee,
Where thinkest our spirits go ?

1st Guard.

Madam, I know not ;

Some say they hang like music in the air,
Some that they sleep in flowers of Paradise,
Some that they lie ingirt by cloudy curtains,
Or 'mong the stars.

Len. Oh ! not among the stars,
 For, if she's there, my sight's so dimmed with tears,
 I ne'er shall find her out,
 But wander through the sparkling labyrinth
 Wearied, alone ; oh ! say not 'mong the stars.
 Why do ye move her ?

1st Guard. We must bear her hence
 Unto the Duke.

Len. What ! Is it not enough
 That she is dead ?

1st Guard. No hand shall offer hurt,
 And in short space we'll bring her back again,
 Unto your cottage.

Len. Thanks ! They shall not harm her ;
 Soldier, I will repay this kindness nobly ;
 Hark you ; I'm going far off, to Paradise,
 And if your child, or wife, or brother's there,
 I'll bring them to you in your dreams some night.
 Farewell ; I will go search about for Comfort,
 Him, that, enrobed in mouldering cerements, sits
 At the grey tombstone's head beneath the yew ;
 Men call him Death, but Comfort is his name.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter two citizens

1st Cit. Well met, sir ; come you from the trial ?

2nd Cit. Aye ;

In wonder that the stones do not come down
 To crush that monster of all wickedness,
 The wretched Hesperus ; there he stands,
 Biting his chains and writhing in his rage
 Like a mad tiger.

1st Cit. Is he yet condemned ?

2nd Cit. Death is the sentence.

1st Cit. See, the criminal
 And his old father ; what a sight of pity.

*Enter HESPERUS guarded, ORLANDO, HUBERT,
LORD ERNEST, and mob*

Hesp. Well, gaping idiots ; have ye stared enough ;
Have ye yet satisfied your pious minds,
By thanking your most bounteous stars ye're not
A prodigy like this ? Get home and tell
Your wives, and put me in your tales and ballads ;
Get home and live.

L. Ern. Oh hush, my son,
Get some good priest of Charity to draw
Tears of repentance from your soul, and wake
The sleeping virtue.

Hesp. Who's this greybeard driveller ?
Go, find your wits, old fellow, that bald skull
Is full of leaks ; hence I look in last night's bowl ;
Search all your money-bags : don't come abroad
Again without them , 'tis amiss.

L. Ern. Oh heavens !
Is this the son, over whose sleeping smiles
Often I bent, and, mingling with my prayers
Thanksgivings, blessed the loan of so much virtue.

Hesp. That's right ; weep on, weep on ; for thou
art he,
Who slew his only child, his first-born child.

Orl. Oh look upon his galling agony,
These desperate yearnings of paternal love,
And try to have an heart.

Hesp. You're merry, friend ;
Troth 'tis a goodly jest : what, dost thou think
These limbs, the strength of nature's armoury,
That but exist to dare, and dare the things
That make the blood of bravery turn pale
For very terror, such a minion's work,
The offspring of those dribbling veins ? Go to,
Thou'rt a sad idiot.

L. Ern. Oh ! hear him not, thou ever-present Justice,

And close thy watchful eyelid, thou that weighest
Th' allotted scale of crime.

Hesp. Come hither, age ;
I have a whisper for your secrecy ;
Consider ; who am I ?

L. Ern. Thou wast my son,
The pulse of my dead heart, light of my eyes,
But now—

Hesp. Thy son ! I would I'd time to laugh.
No, no, attend The night that gave me being,
There was unearthly glee upon the winds,
There were strange gambols played beneath the moon,
The madman smiled uncouthly in his sleep,
And children shrunk aghast at goblin sights ;
Then came a tap against the rattling casement,
Not the owl's wing, or struggle of the blast ;
Thy dotardship snored loudly, and meanwhile
An incubus begot me.

L. Ern. Lead me home,
My eyes are dim, I cannot see the way :
I fain would sleep [*Exit with some of the citizens.*]

Hesp. Go, some one tell his nurse
To get him swaddling clothes.

Orl. Prodigious wretch !
Rebel to man and heaven ! On thee shall fall
The eureless torture of the soul, the woe
Hell nurses for the deepest damned.

Hesp. 'Tis pity
So much good cursing should be thrown away ;
Well spit, my reptile ! Officers, lead on :
Shall I, in bondage, stand to glut the sight
Of these poor marvel-dealing things ? Away,
I'll shut them out, the red death on you all ! [*Going.*]
Ah ! my good fellow, are you of the train
That wait upon Olivia ?

Attend. I'm her servant.

Hesp. How fares she ?

Attend. Very ill,; she wastes,
Careless of living.

Hesp. Tell her, on my love
I charge her live ; oh heaven, *she* must not die,
There are enough accusers in the tomb.
Tell her—Shame, shame, they shall not see me weep.
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

SCENE I. *A room in MORDRED'S cottage*

The dead FLORIBEL laid upon a couch

LENORA and boy

Len. Why dost thou weep, thou little churl ?

Boy. Alas !
I need not say.

Len. Boy, boy ; thou'rt wicked ; thou wouldst have
me think

I have no Floribel, but thou shalt see
How I will make her live.

It is the morning,
And she has risen to tend her favourite flowers,
And, wearied with the toil, leans o'er her seat
In silent languor. Now I will steal in,
Softly : perchance she sleeps. It's plain she hears not,
Or she would leap all-smiling to my arms ;
I wish dear Mordred were awake to see
How the sweet girl will start and welcome me,
At my first speaking : but I'll wait awhile,
And save the pleasure. Ah ! thou pretty silence,
I know thou'rt thinking what a happy cot
'Twill be when our loved patient is quite well.
Yes, you shall take him his first walk ; he'll lean
Upon that arm, and you shall show the plants

New set in the garden, and the grassy path
Down to the church.

Now I will stand behind her,
So—she must drop her head upon my bosom,
As she looks up. Good-morrow to thee, sweet;
Now for her gentle cry; she's turning round.
No—for she won't seem startled, but pretend
To have heard my coming. Why art thou so slow?
Sweet little wag, I know thou'rt not asleep
Soft! 'Tis the swiftness of my thoughts outruns
Her proper motions. I've this instant spoken,
The air has scarcely yet ta'en up my words;
May be she hears not. But I did not speak;
'Twas only thought, or whispered. Child, good-morrow;
Yes, she hears that, but will not stir even yet.
I'll not be frightened, for she surely hears,
Though, if I had not seen her garments move,
And caught the tiny echo of her breath,
'Twere dreadful. Speak, I pray thee, Floribel,
Speak to thy mother, do but whisper 'aye';
Well, well, I will not press her; I am sure
She has the welcome news of some good fortune,
And hoards the telling till her father comes,
Perhaps she's found the fruit he coveted
Last night. Ah! she half laughed. I've guessed it
then;

Come tell me, I'll be secret. Nay, if you mock me,
I must be very angry till you speak.
Now this is silly; some of those young boys
Have dressed the cushions with her clothes in sport.
'Tis very like her. I could make this image
Act all her greetings; she shall bow her head,
'Good-morrow, mother', and her smiling face
Falls on my neck—Oh, heaven, 'tis she indeed!
I know it all—don't tell me.

SCENE II

*The interior of a prison**HESPERUS alone*

Hesp. Hark ! Time's old iron voice already counts
 The steps unto the after-world, o'er which
 Sleep in her arms hath carried man to-night ;
 And all it wakes to business or to joy
 Save one ; and, mingled with its solemn tone,
 I heard the grating gates of hell expand—
 Oh ! house of agony
 I feel thy scorching flames already near
 Where shall I 'scape ? Is there no hiding-place ?
 Spirit, that guidest the sun, look round this ball,
 And through the windows of deep ocean's vault ;
 Is there no nook just big enough for me ?
 Or, when I'm dead, can I not pass my soul
 For common air, and shroud me in some cloud ?
 But then the earth will moulder, clouds vanish ;
 So Hell, I must unto thee, darksome vale ;
 For dared I hope, I could not wish Elysium
 There should I meet the frowns of Floribel,
 My father would be there—black gulf of anguish,
 Thou art far better than such paradise
 Why did they teach me there is such a place ?
 The pang of misery is there ; I know
 There is a land of bliss, and am not in it ;
 This, this outstings your lashes, torturers ;
 He has no lack of punishment who feels it.

Enter Jailor

Oh ! speak not for a moment, speak not, sir,
 I know thine errand well ; so tell it not.
 But let me shut mine eyes, and think a little

That I am what I was. Aye, there he sits
My good old sire, with his large eye of love.
How well it smiles upon that lovely maid,
A beauteous one, indeed ; and yet, they say,
She died most cruelly. Oh ! tell me something,
Drive out these dreams.

Jail. Prisoner, prepare for death. [*Exit.*

Hesp. Death ! Death ! What's death ? I cannot
think

Enter LENORA

Who art thou ?

Len. Ha ! knowest thou not the wretch thou'st
made Lenora ?

Alone I've found thee, villain.

Hesp. Not alone ;

Oh ! not alone : the world hath burst its ribs,
And let out all the demons in the pit ;
Thick ; thick they throng ; I cannot breathe for them ;
The hounds of Lucifer are feeding on me,
Yet I endure , Remorse and Conscience too,
Stirring the dying embers of my heart,
Which Passion hath burnt out, like midnight gossips
Sit idly chattering of the injured dead ,
But thou'rt the last and worst , I hoped to hide
Beneath the turf from thee.

Len. Thou shalt not leave me ; stand and hear my
curse,

Oh such a curse ! I learned it from a voice
That wandered 'mid the damned . it burns my tongue,
Listeu, wretch, listen ,

Thus, thus I curse thee. . . . No I do revoke it,
My pardon be upon you for your deeds ,
Though thou didst stab me through my Floribel,
I think thou once didst love her, didst thou not ?

Hesp. With my whole soul, as now I worship her.

Len. Alas ! say no ; I wish thou'dst break my
heart ;

Now, prithee do ; I'll bless thee for't again.

Hesp. What ! is it stubborn yet ? Then thou canst teach me

How to bear misery—but I need it not,
They've dug my grave.

Len. But, while you still are living,
What say you to some frolic merriment ?
There are two grassy mounds beside the church,
My husband and my daughter ; let us go
And sit beside them, and learn silence there ;
Even with such guests we'll hold our revelry
O'er bitter recollections : there's no anguish,
No fear, no sorrow, no calamity,
In the deathful catalogue of human pains,
But we will jest upon't, and laugh and sing :
Let pitiful wretches whine for consolation,
Thank heaven we despair.

Enter guards

Hesp. See you these men ?
They bid me to a strange solemnity.

Len. Must thou be gone ?

Hesp. I must alas ! for ever
Live and be blessed, mother of Floribel

Exit with guards.

Len. Farewell, far-well They drag him to the
scatfold,

My son, the husband of my Floribel :
They shall not slaughter him upon the block,
And to the cursing multitude hold up
The blackened features which she loved ; they shall
not. [Exit.

SCENE III

An apartment in ORLANDO's palace

OLIVIA, VIOLETTA, and attendants

Oliv. Sing me that strain, my gentle Violet,
Which erst we used, in sport and mockery
Of grief, beneath the willow shade at eve
To chaunt together, 'twill allay my woes.

Song, by two voices

First Voice

Who is the baby, that doth lie
Beneath the silken canopy
Of thy blue eye?

Second

It is young Sorrow, laid asleep
In the crystal deep

Both

Let us sing his lullaby,
Heigho! a sob and a sigh.

First Voice

What sound is that, so soft, so clear,
Harmonious as a bubbled tear
Bursting, we hear?

Second

It is young Sorrow, slumber breaking
Suddenly awaking.

Both

Let us sing his lullaby,
Heigho! a sob and a sigh.

Oliv. 'Tis well : you must not weep ; 'twill spoil
your voices,
And I shall need them soon.

Viol. For what, Olivia ?
You were not wont to prize our simple skill
Erewhile so highly : what will please you most ?
What lay of chivalry, or rural sport,
Or shepherd love, shall we prepare you next ?

Oliv. My dirge : I shall not tax your music else.
It must be : wherefore weep ?

Viol. I cannot help it,
When you converse so mournfully of death ;
You must forgive me.

Oliv. Death ! thou silly girl,
There's no such thing ; 'tis but a goblin word,
Which bad men conjure from their reeking sins
To haunt their slumbers ; 'tis a life indeed.
These bodies are the vile and drossy seeds,
Whence, placed again within their kindred earth,
Springs Immortality, the glorious plant
Branching above the skies. What is there here
To shrink from ? Though your idle legends tell
How cruelly he treats the prostrate world ;
Yet, unto me, this shadowy potentate
Comes soft and soothing as an infant's sleep,
And kisses out my being. *Viola.*
Dost thou regard my wish, perhaps the last ?

Viol. Oh ! madam, can you doubt it ? We have lived
Together ever since our little feet
Were guided on the path, and thence have shared
Habits and thoughts. Have I in all that time,
That long companionship, e'er thwarted thee ?
Why dost thou ask me then ? Indeed I know not
Thy wishes from my own, but to prefer them.
Then tell me what you will ; if its performance
But occupy the portion of a minute.
'Twill be a happy one, for which I thank you.

Oliv. Thine hand upon it ; I believe thy promise.
When I am gone you must not weep for me,
But bring your books, your paintings, and your flowers,
And sit upon my grassy monument
In the dewy twilight, when they say souls come
Walking the palpable gross world of man,
And I will waft the sweetest odours o'er you ;
I'll shower down acorn-cups of spicy rain
Upon your couch, and twine the boughs above ;
Then, if you sing, I'll take up Echo's part,
And from a far-off bower give back the ends
Of some remembered airy melody ;
Then, if you draw, I'll breathe upon the banks
And freshen up the flowers, and send the birds,
Stammering their madrigals, across your path ;
Then, if you read, I'll tune the rivulets,
I'll teach the neighbouring shrubs to fan your temples,
And drive sad thoughts and fevers from your breast ;
But, if you sleep, I'll watch your truant sense,
And meet it in the fairy-land of dreams
With my lap full of blessings ; 'twill, methinks,
Be passing pleasant, so don't weep for me.

Viol. I fear, Olivia, I'm a selfish creature,
These tears drop not for you, but for myself ;
'Tis not that death will have you, but that I
Shall be a lone lost thing without your love.

Oliv. My love will spread its wings for ever near you ;
Each gentler, nobler, and diviner thought
Will be my prompting.

Viol. Well, I'll bear it then,
And even persuade myself this intercourse
Of disembodied minds is no conjecture,
No fiction of romance. The summer sun
Will find me on the sod that covers you,
Among the blossoms ; I'll try not to cry ;
And when I hear a rustle in the grass,
Or the soft leaves come kissing my bent arm,

I shall not lay it to the empty air,
But think I know thy utterance in the noises
That answer me, and see thy rosy fingers
Dimpling the brooks.

Oliv. Thou wilt be cheerful, then ?

Viol. Yes, with this hope,
That when, some silent, melancholy night,
I've sobbed myself to sleep over your picture,
Or some memorial of your former kindness,
I shall awaken to ethereal music,
And find myself a spirit with Olivia. [*A bell tolls*

Oliv. Whose summons loads the gale with mourn-
ful sound ?

Attend. Dear lady ?

Oliv. I ask who's dead or who's to die :
You need not tell me : I remember now,—
It was a thought I wished to keep away.
My love, my Hesperus, unto me thou wert
The gentlest and the kindest ; sudden madness
Must have inspired this deed ; and why do I,
Wife of the dying, tarry in the world ?
I feel already dissolution's work ;
A languor creeps through all my torpid veins ;
Support me, maidens.

Viol. Come unto your couch ;
Sleep will recruit thee.

Oliv. Yes ; the breathless sleep ;
Come and pray round me, as I fade away ;
My life already oozes from my lips,
And with that bell's last sound I shall expire.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV

The place of execution

HESPERUS *guarded*. HUBERT, ORLANDO,
citizens, etc.

Hesp. Now in the scornful silence of your features
I see my hated self—my friends I was
The pestilence you think of, but to-night
Angelic ministers have been with me,
And by the holy communings of conscience
Wrought a most blessed change; my soul has wept
And lain among the thorns of penitence;
I ask (and you will not refuse the boon
To one who cannot crave again) forgiveness
For all that in the noontide of my crimes
Against you, even in thought, I have committed.

Orl. And we rejoice to grant it; and if prayers,
In meek sincerity outpoured avail
You have them from our hearts

Hesp. Thy sister's soul spake in those words, Orlando;
A wretch's blessing for them. I'm as one
In some lone watch-tower on the deep, awakened
From soothing visions of the home he loves:
Trembling he hears the wrathful billows whoop,
And feels the little chamber of his life
Torn from its vale of clouds, and, as it falls,
In his midway to fate, beholds the gleam
Of blazing ships, some swallowed by the waves,
Some, pregnant with mock thunder, tossed abroad,
With mangled carcases, among the winds;
And the black sepulchre of ocean, choaked
With multitudinous dead; then shrinks from pangs,
Unknown but destined. All I know of death
Is, that 'twill come. I have seen many die

Upon the battlefield; and watched their lips
At the final breath, pausing in doubts to hear
If they were gone. I have marked oftentimes
Their pale eyes fading in the last blue twilight;
But none could speak the burning agony,
None told his feelings. I ne'er dreamed I died,
Else might I guess the torture that attends it.
But men unhurt have lost their several senses,
Grown deaf, and blind, and dumb without a pang,
And surely these are members of the soul,
And, when they fail, man tastes a partial death:
Besides our minds share not corporeal sleep,
But go among the past and future, or perhaps
Inspire another in some waking world,
And there's another death.

I will not fear; why do ye linger, guards?
I've flung my doubts away; my blood grows wild.

Hub. The hour appointed is not yet arrived,
Some moments we must wait; I pray you, patience.

*Enter LORD ERNEST in the dress of a peasant,
followed by CLAUDIO*

Clau. My lord, where dost thou hurry?

L. Ern. To Despair,

Away! I know thee not! Henceforth I'll live
Those bitter days that Providence decrees me,
In toil and poverty. Oh son, loved son,
I come to give thee my last tear and blessing;
Thou wilt not curse the old, sad wretch again?

Hesp. (Falling upon the ground and covering himself
with the loose earth) Oh trample me to dust.

L. Ern. (Lying down beside him) My own dear
child;

Aye, we will lie thus sweetly in the grave,
(The wind will not awake us, nor the rain.)
Thou and thy mother and myself; but I,

Alas ! I have some tearful years to come,
Without a son to weep along with me.

Hesp. Father, dear father !

And wilt thou pray for me ? Oh, no ! thou can'st
not,

Thou must forget or hate me.

L. Ern.

Sirs, have pity,

Let him not use me thus. *Hesperus, Hesperus,*

Thou'rt going to thy mother, tell her, son,

My heart will soon be broken, so prepare

To have me with you Bless thee, boy, good-night.

[*Exit.*

Hesp. My father, heaven will curse thee if I bless ;
But I shall die the better for this meeting. [*Kneeling.*

Oh, Floribel ! fair martyr of my fury,

Oh, thou blessed saint ! look down and see thy ven-
geance,

And, if thy injured nature still can pity,

Whisper some comfort to my soul. 'Tis done ;

I feel an airy kiss upon my cheek ;

It is her breath, she hears me ; she descends ;

Her spirit is around me Now I'll die.

Enter LENORA

Len. Where's Hesperus ? Not gone ? Speak to me
loud,

I hear not for the beating of my heart.

We're not both dead ? Say thou hast 'scaped the
headsman,

Nor felt the severing steel fall through thy neck.

Hesp. I stay one moment for the signal here,
The next I am no more.

Len.

Then we have conquered.

Friend, leave us ; I would speak a private word

Unto thy prisoner. Look upon these flowers ;

They grew upon the grave of Floribel,

And, when I pulled them, through their tendrils blew

A sweet soft music, like an angel's voice.
 Ah! there's her eye's dear blue; the blushing down
 Of her ripe cheek in yonder rose; and there
 In that pale bud, the blossom of her brow,
 Her pitiful round tear; here are all colours
 That bloomed the fairest in her heavenly face;
 Is't not her breath?

Hesp. (*Smelling them*) It falls upon my soul
 Like an unearthly sense.

Len. And so it should,
 For it is Death thou'st quaffed:
 'I steeped the plants in a magician's potion,
 More deadly than the scum of Pluto's pool,
 Or the infernal brewage that goes round
 From lip to lip at wizards' mysteries;
 One drop of it, poured in a city conduit,
 Would ravage wider than a year of plague;
 It brings death swifter than the lightning shaft.

Hesp. 'Tis true: I feel it gnawing at my heart,
 And my veins boil as though with molten lead.
 How shall I thank thee for this last, best gift?

Len. What is it rushes burning through my mouth?
 Oh! my heart's melted. Let me sit awhile.

Hub. Hear ye the chime? Prisoner, we must be
 gone;
 Already should the sentence be performed.

Hesp. Oh! I am past your power.

(*To Lenora*) How farest thou now?

Len. Oh! come with me, and view
 These banks of stars, these rainbow-girt pavilions,
 These rivulets of music—hark, hark, hark!
 And here are winged maidens floating round,
 With smiles and welcomes; this bright beaming
 seraph

I should remember; is it not—my daughter? [*Dies.*]

¹ The reader will recollect Massinger's *Duke of Milan*.

Hesp. I see not those ; but the whole earth's in motion ;
I cannot stem the billows ; now they roll :
And what's this deluge ? Ah ! Infernal flames !

[*Falls.*

Hub. Guards, lift him up.

Hesp. The bloody hunters and their dogs ! Avaunt—
Tread down these serpents' heads Come hither,
Murder ;

Why dost thou growl at me ? Ungrateful hound !
Not know thy master ? Tear him off ! Help ! Mercy !
Down with your fiery fangs !—I'm not dead yet.

[*Dies.*

THE SECOND BROTHER
AN UNFINISHED DRAMA

PERSONS REPRESENTED

MARCELLO ; } Brothers of the Duke of Ferrara.
ORAZIO ; }
VARINI ; }
MICHELE ; } Nobles.
BATTISTA ; }
EZRII ; a Jew.
MELCHIOR.

VALERIA ; Varini's daughter and Orazio's wife.
ARMIDA.
ROSAURA.
A FEMALE ATTENDANT.

Gentlemen, Ladies, Guards, and Attendants.

SCENE ; Ferrara.

THE SECOND BROTHER

ACT I

SCENE I *A street in Ferrara*

MICHELE and BATTISTA meeting : MARCELLO
at the side

Mich. Fair shine this evening's stars upon your
pleasures,
Battista Sorbi !

Batt. Sir, well met to-night :
Methinks our path is one.

Mich. And all Ferrara's.
There's not a candle lit to-night at home ,
And for the cups,—they'll be less wet with wine
Than is the inmost grain of all this earth
With the now-falling dew. None sit in doors,
Except the babe, and his forgotten grandsire,
And such as, out of life, each side do lie
Against the shutter of the grave or womb.
The rest that build up the great hill of life,
From the crutch-riding boy to his sweet mother,
The deer-eyed girl, and the brown fellow of war,
To the grey head and grandest sire of all
That's half in heaven,—all these are forth to-night ;
And there they throng upon both sides the river,
Which, guessing at its hidden banks, flows on,
A water-stream betwixt two tides of flesh—
And still the streets pour on.

Batt. And where go they ?
To the feast, the wine, the lady-footed dance,
Where you, and I, and every citizen
That has a feathered and a jewelled cap,
And yonthful curls to hang beside it brownly—
To the Duke's brother, Lord Orazio's palace.

Marc. (*Aside*) Orazio ! what of him ?

Mich. Aye, that's a man
After the heart of Bacchus ! By my life,
There is no mortal stuff, that foots the earth,
Able to wear the shape of man, like him,
And fill it with the carriage of a god.
We're but the tools and scaffolding of men,
The lines, the sketch, and he the very thing :
And, if we share the name of manhood with him,
Thus in the woods the tattered, wool-hung briar,
And the base, bowing poplar, the winds' slave,
Are trees—and so's the great and kingly oak,
Within whose branches, like a soul, does dwell
The sun's bold eagle : as the villain fox,
The weazel, and the sneaking cur are beasts,
While he, whose wine is in a giant's heart,
The royal lion has no bigger name.
Let men be trees, why then he is the oak ;
Let men be beasts, he is their lion-master ;
Let them be stars, and then he is a sun,
A sun whose beams are gold, the night his noon,
His summer-field a marble hall of banquets,
With jasper, onyx, amber-leaved cups
On golden straws for flowers, and, for the dew,
Wine of the richest grape. So let's not talk
And breathe away the time, whose sands are thawed
Into such purple tears, but drink it off.

Batt. Why then, away ! let's fit our velvet arms,
And on together.

Marc. (*Advancing*) Nobles of Ferrara,
My gentle lords, have pity for a man,

Whom fortune and the roundness of the world
Have, from his feeble footing on its top,
Flung to deep poverty. When I was born,
They hid my helplessness in purple wraps,
And cradled me within a jewelled crown.
But now—O bitter now!—what name of woe,
Beyond the knowledge of the lips of hell,
Is fitted to my poor and withering soul,
And its old, wretched dwelling?

Batt.

What is this?

Methinks that a præ-adamite skeleton,
Burst from the grave in a stolen cloak of flesh,
Ragged and threadbare, from a witch's back,
Who lived an hundred years, would scarcely seem
More miserably old.

Mich.

A wandering beggar,

Come to Ferrara with the daily lie,
That bears him bread. Come on, and heed him not.
The stocks, old sir, grow in our streets.

Enter a gentleman

How now?

What's your news, sir?

Gent.

He's coming through this street,
Orazio, wrapt, like Bacchus, in the hide
Of a specked panther, with his dancing nymphs,
And torches bright and many, as his slaves
Had gathered up the fragments of the sun
That fell just now. Hark! here his music comes

*Enter ORAZIO, between ARMIDA and ROSAURA,
attended*

Oraz. Thrice to the moon, and thrice unto the sun,
And thrice unto the lesser stars of night,
From tower and hill, by trump and cannon's voice,
Have I proclaimed myself a deity's son:

Not Alexander's father, Ammon old,
But ivied Bacchus, do I call my sire.
Hymn it once more.

Song

Strew not earth with empty stars,
Strew it not with roses,
Nor feathers from the crest of Mars,
Nor summer's idle posies.
'Tis not the primrose-sandalled moon,
Nor cold and silent morn,
Nor he that climbs the dusty noon,
Nor mower war with scythe that drops,
Stuck with helmed and turbaned tops
Of enemies new shorn.

Ye cups, ye lyres, ye trumpets know,
Pour your music, let it flow,
'Tis Bacchus' son who walks below.

Oraz. Now break that kiss, and answer me, my
Hebe ;

Has our great sire a planet in the sky—
One of these lights ?

Rosau. Not yet, I think, my lord.

Oraz. My lord ? my love ! I am the Lord of Love ;
So call me by my dukedom. He has not ?
We'll make him one, my nymph : when those bright
eyes

Are closed, and that they shall not be, I swear,
'Till I have loved them many thousand hours—
But when they are, their blue enchanted fire
Cupid shall take upon a torch of heaven,
And light the woody sides of some dim world,
Which shall be Bacchus' godson-star.

Rosau.

Alas !

Their fire is but unsteady, weak and watery,

To guess by your love's wavering.

Oraz.

Wine in a ruby !

I'll solemnize their beauty in a draught,
Pressed from the summer of an hundred vines.
Look on't, my sweet. Rosaura, this same night
I will immortalize those lips of thine,
That make a kiss so spicy. Touch the cup :
Ruby to ruby ! Slave, let it be thrown,
At midnight, from a boat into mid-sea
Rosaura's kiss shall rest unravished there,
While sea and land lie in each other's arms,
And curl the world.

Batt.

Beggar, stand back, I say.

Marc. No ; I will shadow your adored mortal,
And shake my rags at him. Dost fear the plague ?
Musk-fingered boy, aside !

Oraz.

What madman's this ?

Rosau. Keep him away from me !

His hideous raggedness tears the soft sight,
Where it is pictured.

Marc. Your clutch is like the grasping of a wave :
Off from my shoulder ! Now, my velvet fellow,
Let's measure limbs Well, is your flesh to mine
As gold to lead, or but the common plaster
That wraps up bones ? Your skin is not of silk ;
Your face not painted with an angel's feather
With tints from morning's lip, but the daubed clay ;
These veiny pipes hold a dog's lap of blood.
Let us shake hands ; I tell thee, brother skeleton,
We're but a pair of puddings for the dinner
Of Lady worm ; you served in silks and gems,
I garnished with plain rags. Have I unlocked thee ?

Oraz. Insolent beggar !

Marc.

Prince ! but we must shake hands.

Look you, the round earth's sleeping like a serpent,
Who drops her dusty tail upon her crown
Just here. Oh, we are like two mountain peaks,

Of two close planets, catching in the air :
You, King Olympus, a great pile of summer,
Wearing a crown of gods ; I, the vast top
Of the ghosts' deadly world, naked and dark,
With nothing reigning on my desolate head
But one old spirit of a murdered god,
Palaced within the corpse of Saturn's father.
Then let's come near and hug. There's nothing like
thee

But I thy contrast. Thou'rt a prince, they say ?

Oraz. That you shall learn. You knaves, that wear
my livery,

Will you permit me still to be defiled
By this worm's venom ? Tread upon his neck,
And let's walk over him.

Marc. Forbear, my lord !

I am a king of that most mighty empire,
That's built o'er all the earth, upon kings' crowns ;
And poverty's its name ; whose every hut
Stands on a coronet, or star, or mitre,
The glorious corner-stones. But you are weary,
And would be playing with a woman's cheek :
Give me a purse then, prince.

Oraz. No, not a doit :

The metal, I bestow, shall come in chains.

Marc. Well, I can curse. Aye, prince, you have a
brother —

Oraz. The Duke—he'll scourge you.

Marc. Nay, the second, sir,

Who, like an envious river, flows between
Your footsteps and Ferrara's throne.

Oraz. He's gone :

Asia, and Africa, the sea he went on,
Have many mouths, and in a dozen years,
(His absence' time), no tidings or return,
Tell me We are but two.

Marc. If he were in Ferrara—

Oraz. Stood he before me there,
By you, in you, as like as you're unlike,
Straight as you're bowed, young as you are old
And many years nearer than him to Death,
The falling brilliancy of whose white sword
Your ancient locks so silverly reflect,
I would deny, outswear, and overreach,
And pass him with contempt, as I do you.
Jove! how we waste the stars set on, my friends.

Batt. But the old ruffian ?

Oraz Think of him to-morrow.
See, Venus rises in the softening heaven :
Let not your eyes abuse her sacred beams,
By looking through their gentleness on ought
But lips, and eyes, and blushes of dear love.

Song

Strike, you myrtle-crowned boys,
Ivied maidens, strike together :
Magic lutes are these, whose noise
Our fingers gather,
Threaded thrice with golden strings
From Cupid's bow ,
And the sounds of its sweet voice
Not air, but little busy things,
Pinioned with the lightest feather
Of his wings,
Rising up at every blow
Round the chords, like flies from roses
Zephyr-touched ; so these light minions
Hover round, then shut their pinions,
And drop into the air, that closes
Where music's sweetest sweet reposes.

[Exit ORAZIO with his retinue.]

Marc. (Solus) Then who hath sohtude, like mine,
that is not
The last survivor of a city's plague,

Eating the mess he cooked for his dead father ?
Who is alone but I ? there's fellowship
In churchyards and in hell : but I !—no lady's ghost
Did ever cling with such a grasp of love
Unto its soft dear body, as I hung
Rooted npon this brother. I went forth
Joyfully, as the soul of one who closes
His pillowed eyes beside an unseen murderer,
And like its horrible return was mine,
To find the heart, wherein I breathed and beat,
Cold, gashed, and dead. Let me forget to love,
And take a heart of venom : let me make
A staircase of the frightened breasts of men,
And climb into a lonely happiness !
And thou, who only art alone as I,
Great solitary god of that one sun,
I charge thee, by the likeness of our state,
Undo these human veins that tie me close
To other men, and let your servant griefs
Unmilk me of my mother, and pour in
Salt scorn and steaming hate !

Enter EZRIL

Ezr. How, now my lord ?

Marc. Much better, my kind Jew. They've weeded
out

A troublesome wild plant that grew upon me,
My heart : I've trampled it to dust, and wept it
Wetter than Nilus' side. Out of the sun !
And let him bake it to a winged snake.
—Well, you've been shouldered from the palace steps,
And spurned as I ?—No matter.

Ezr. Nay, my lord !
Come with me : lay aside these squalid wrappings :
Prepare that honoured head to fit a crown,
For 'twill be empty of your brother soon.

Marc. What starry chance has dropped out of the skies ?

What's this ? Oh ! now if it should but be so,
I'll build a bridge to heaven. Tell me, good Jew ;
Excellent Ezril, speak.

Ezr. At your command
I sought the ducal palace, and, when there,
Found all the wild-eyed servants in the courts
Running about on some dismaying errand,
In the wild manner of a market crowd,
Waked, from the sunny dozing at their stalls,
By one who cries ' the city is on fire ' ,
Just so they crossed, and turned, and came again.
I asked of an old man, what this might mean ;
And he, yet grappling with the great disaster
As if he would have killed it, like a fable,
By unbelief, coldly, as if he spoke
Of something gone a century before,
Told me, the Duke in hunting had been thrown,
And lay on his last bed

Marc. Ha ! well ! what next ?
You are the cup-bearer of richest joy —
But it was a report, a lie — Have done —
I read it on your lip.

Ezr. It was too true.
I went to his bedside, and there made trial
Of my best skill in physic, with the zeal
Due to my sovereign.

Marc. Impious, meddling fool !
To thrust yourself 'twixt heaven and its victim !

Ezr. My lord, I think you would not have said so
In the sad chamber of the writhing man
He lay in a red fever's quenchless flames,
Burning to dust : despairing of my skill,
I sat myself beside his heart, and spoke
Of his next brother. When he heard of you,
He bade be summoned all his counsellors,

To witness his bequeathing his dominion
Wholly to you.

Marc. Why did you let me wait ?
Come, let's be quick : he keeps beneath his pillow
A kingdom, which they'll steal if we're too late.
We must o'ertake his death. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A saloon in ORAZIO'S palace, brilliantly lighted : at the bottom of the stage open folding-doors, through which a banqueting-room is seen, with a table, at which ORAZIO and his guests, feasting, are partially visible

Music and Song

Will you sleep these dark hours, maiden,
Beneath the vine that rested
Its slender boughs, so purply-laden,
All the day around that elm
In the mead, nightingale-nested,
Which yon dark hill wears for an helm,
Pasture-robed and forest-crested ?
There the night of lovely hue
Peeps the fearful branches through,
And ends in those two eyes of blue.

ORAZIO and ARMIDA come forward

Armida. What ! wrap a frown in myrtle, and look sad
Beneath the shadow of an ivy wreath ?
This should not be, my lord.

Oraz. Armida dear,
I'm weary of their laughter's empty din.
Methinks, these fellows, with their ready jests,
Are like to tedious bells, that ring alike
Marriage or death. I would we were alone—
Asleep, Armida.

Armid. They will soon be gone :
One half-hour more—

Oraz. No, it could not be so :
I think and think—Sweet, did you like the feast ?

Armid. Methought, 'twas gay enough.

Oraz. Now, I did not.
'Twas dull : all men spoke slow and emptily.
Strange things were said by accident. Their tongues
Uttered wrong words . one fellow drank my death,
Meaning my health , another called for poison,
Instead of wine , and, as they spoke together,
Voices were heard, most loud, which no man owned :
There were more shadows too than there were men ;
And all the air more dark and thick than night
Was heavy, as 'twere made of something more
Than living breaths.

Armid. Nay, you are ill, my lord :
'Tis merely melancholy.

Oraz. There were deep hollows
And pauses in their talk ; and then, again,
On tale, and song, and jest, and laughter rang,
Like a fiend's gallop. By my ghost, 'tis strange

Armid. Come, my lord, join your guests , they look
with wonder
Upon your lonely mood.

Oraz. It is the trick
Of these last livers to unbuild belief :
They'd rob the world of spirit. Then each look,
Aye, every aspect of the earth and sky,
Man's thought and hope, are lies. Well ; I'll return,
And look at them again.

*He approaches the door of the inner room : from
which MICHELE advances*

Mich. You're tired, my lord.
Our visit's long : break off, good gentlemen :
The hour is late.

Oraz. Nay, I beseech you, stay :
My pleasure grows on yours. I'm somewhat dull ;
But let me not infect you.

[Exeunt MICHELE and ARMIDA through the folding-door : ORAZIO is following them, but is stopped by the entry of an attendant, from the side.]

What with you ?

Attend. A lady, in the garment of a nun,
Desires to see you.

Oraz. Lead her in : all such
I thank for their fair countenance.

Enter VALERIA, introduced by attendant, who withdraws
Gentle stranger,

Your will with me ?

Valer. I am the bearer of another's will :
A woman, whose unhappy fondness yet
May trouble her lord's memory—Valeria—
Your's for a brief, blessed time, who now dwells
In her abandoned being patiently,
But not unsorrowing, sends me.

Oraz. My wronged wife !
Too purely good for such a man as I am !
If she remembers me, then Heaven does too,
And I am not yet lost. Give me her thoughts—
Aye, the same words she put into thine ears,
Safe and entire, and I will thank thy lips
With my heart's thanks. But tell me how she
fares.

Valer. Well ; though the common eye, that has a
tear,
Would drop it for the paleness of her skin,
And the wan shivering of her torch of life ;
Though she be faint and weak, yet very well :
For not the tincture, or the strength of limb,
Is a true health, but readiness to die.—
But let her be, or be not.

Oraz. Best of ladies !
And, if thy virtnes did not glut the mind,
To the extinction of the eye's desire,
Such a delight to see, that one would think
Our looks were thrown away on meaner things,
And given to rest on thee !

Valer. These words, my lord,
Are charitable ; it is very kind
To think of her sometimes for day and night,
As they flow in and out of one another,
She sits beside and gazes on their streams,
So filled with the strong memory of you,
That all her outward form is penetrated,
Until the watery portrait is become
Not hers, but yours : and so she is content
To wear her time out.

Oraz. Softest peace enwrap her !
Content be still the breathing of her lips !
Be tranquil ever, thou blest life of her !
And that last hour that hangs 'tween heaven and
earth,

So often travelled by her thoughts and prayers,
Be soft and yielding 'twixt her spirit's wings !

Valer. Think'st thou, Orazio, that she dies but once ?
All round and through the spaces of creation,
No hiding-place of the least air, or earth,
Or sea, invisible, untrod, unrained on,
Contains a thing alone. Not e'en the bird,
That can go up the labyrinthine winds
Between its pinions, and pursues the summer—
Not even the great serpent of the billows,
Who winds him thrice around this planet's waist,
Is by itself, in joy or suffering
But she whom you have ta'en, and, like a leaven,
With your existence kneaded, must be ever
Another—scarce another—self of thine.

Oraz. If she has read her heart aloud to you,

Or you have found it open by some chance,
Tell me, dear lady, is my name among
Her paged secrets? does she, can she love me?—
No, no; that's mad: does she remember me?

Valer. She breathes away her weary days and nights
Among cold, hard-eyed men, and hides behind
A quiet face of woe: but there are things—
A song, a face, a picture, or a word—
Which, by some semblance, touch her heart to tears.
And music, starting up among the strings
Of a wind-shaken harp, undoes her secrecy,
Rolls back her life to the first starry hour
Whose flower-fed air you used, to speak of love;
And then she longs to throw her bursting breast,
And shut out sorrow with Orazio's arms—
Thus—O my husband!

Oraz. Sweetest, sweetest woman!
Valeria, thou dost squeeze eternity
Into this drop of joy. O come, come, come!
Let us not speak; give me my wife again!
O thou fair creature, full of my own soul!
We'll love, we'll love, like nothing under heaven,
Like nought but Love, the very truest god.
Here's lip-room on thy cheek: there, shut thine eye,
And let me come, like sleep, and kiss its lid.
Again. What shall I do? I speak all wrong,
And lose a soul-full of delicious thought
By talking. Hush! Let's drink each other up
By silent eyes. Who lives, but thou and I,
My heavenly wife?

Valer. Dear Orazio!

Oraz. I'll watch thee thus, till I can tell a second
By thy cheek's change. O what a rich delight!
There's something very gentle in thy cheek,
That I have never seen in other women:
And, now I know the circle of thine eye,
It is a colour like to nothing else

But what it means—that's heaven. This little tress,

Thou'lt give it me to look on and to wear,
But first I'll kiss its shadow on thy brow.
That little, fluttering dimple is too late,
If he is for the honey of thy looks :
As sweet a blush, as ever rose did copy,
Budded and opened underneath my lips,
And shed its leaves ; and now those fairest cheeks
Are snowed upon them Let us whisper, sweet,
And nothing be between our lips and ears

But our own secret souls [A horn without.

Valer. Heaven of the blest, they're here !

Oraz. Who, what, Valeria ?

Thou'rt pale and tremblest : what is it ?

Valer. Alas !

A bitter kernel to our taste of joy,
Our foolish and forgetful joy. My father !
Destruction, misery—

Enter VARINI and attendants

Varin. Turn out those slaves—

Burst the closed doors and occupy the towers

Oraz. Varini's self ! what can his visit bring !

Valer. Look there ; he's walking hither like a man,
But is indeed a sea of stormy ruin,
Filling and flooding o'er this golden house
From base to pinnacle, swallowing thy lands,
Thy gold, thine all. Embrace me into thee,
Or he'll divide us.

Oraz. Never ! calm thyself.—

Now, Count Varini, what's your business here ?

If as a guest, though uninvited, welcome !

If not, then say, what else ?

Varin. A master, spendthrift !

Open those further doors—

Oraz. What ? in my palace !

I'arin. Thine! what is thine beneath the night or day?

Not e'en that beggar's carcase, for within that
The swimsh devils of filthy luxury
Do make their sty. No lands, no farms, no houses—
Thanks to thy debts, no gold. Go out! Thou'rt
nothing

Besides a grave and a deep hell.

Valer.

Orazio,

Thou hast Valeria: the world may shake thee off,
But thou wilt drop into this breast, this love,
And it shall hold thee.

Oraz.

What? lost already!

O that curst steward! I have fallen, Valeria,
Deeper than Lucifer, though ne'er so high
Into a place made underneath all things,
So low and horrible that hell's its heaven

I'arin. Thou shalt not have the idiot though she be
The very fool and sickness of my blood.

Gentlemen, here are warrants for my act—
His debts, bonds, forfeitures, taxes and fines,
O'erbalancing the worth of his estates,
Which I have bought: behold them!—For the girl,
Abandoned, after marriage, by the villain—
I am her father: let her be removed;
And, if the justice of my rightful cause
Ally you not, at least do not resist me.

Mich. What are these writings?

Batt.

Bills under the Duke's seal,

All true and valid. Poor Orazio!

Oraz. Why, the rogue pities me! I'm down indeed.

Valer. Help me! Oh! some of you have been be
loved,

Some must be married. Will you let me go?
Will you stand frozen there, and see them cut
Two hearts asunder? Then you will—you do.
Are all men like my father? are all fathers

So far away from men ? or all their sons
So heartless ? you are women, as I am ;
Then pity me, as I would pity you,
And pray for me ! Father ! ladies ! friends !
But you are tearless as the desert sands.
Orazio, love me ! or, if thou wilt not,
Yet I will love thee : that you cannot help.

Oraz. My best Valeria ! never shalt thou leave
me,

But with my life O that I could put on
These teeble arms the proud and tawny strength
Of the lion in my heart !

I'arin. Out with the girl at once !

Rosaur. Forgive them, sir, we all of us beseech.

I'arin Lady, among you all she's but one sire,
And he says *no*.—Away !

Valer. Have pity, my sweet father ! my good father !
Have pity, as my gentle mother would,
Were she alive—thy sainted wife ! O pardon,
If I do wish you had been rent asunder,
Thus dreadfully, for then I had not been,
Not kissed and wept upon my father's hand,
And he denied me ! you can make me wretched !
Be cruel still, but I will never hate you.
Orazio, I'll tell thee what it is :
The world is dry of love ; we've drunk it all
With our two hearts—

Oraz. Farewell, Valéria !

Take on thy lost dear hand this truest kiss,
Which I have brought thee from my deepest soul.
Farewell, my wife !

Valer. They cannot part us long.
What's life ? our love is an eternity .
O blessed hope !

[*She is forced out.*]

Oraz. Now then, sir ; speak to me :
The rest is sport—like rain against a tower
Unpalsied by the rain. Go on : what's next ?

Varin. Your palaces are mine, your sheep-specked pastures,
Forest and yellow cornland, grove and desert,
Earth, water, wealth : all, that you yesterday
Were mountainously rich and golden with,
I, like an earthquake, in this minute take.
Go, go : I will not pick thee to the bones :
Starve as you will.

Oraz. How, sir ! am I not wealthy ?
Why, if the sun could melt the brazen man
That strode o'er Corinth, and whose giant form
Stretched its swart limbs along sea, island, mountain,
While night appeared its shadow—if *he* could—
Great, burning Phœbus' self—could melt ought of him,
Except the snowdrift on his rugged shoulder,
Thou hast destroyed *me* !

Varin. Thanks to these banquets of Olympus' top
From whence you did o'erturn whole Niles of wine,
And made each day as rainy as that hour
When Perseus was begot, I have destroyed thee,
Or thou thyself ; for, such a luxury
Would wring the gold out of its rocky shell,
And leave the world all hollow. So, begone,
My lord, and beggar !

Bath. Noble, old Varin.
Think, is it fit to crush into the dirt
Even the ruins of nobility ?
Take comfort, sir.

Oraz. Who am I now ?
How long is a man dying or being born ?
Is't possible to be a king and beggar
In half a breath ? or to begin a minute
I' th' west, and end it in the furthest east ?
O no ! I'll not believe you. When I do,
My heart will crack to powder. Can you speak ?
Then do : shout something louder than my thoughts,
For I begin to feel.

Enter a messenger

Mess. News from the court :

The Duke—

Oraz. My brother—speak—

Was he not ill, and on a perilous bed ?

Speak life and death, thou hast them on thy tongue—

One's mine, the other his : a look, a word,

A motion—life or death ?

Mess. The Duke is dead.

[Battista and the other guests kneel to ORAZIO.]

Batt Then we salute in thee another sovereign.

Oraz. Me then, who just was shaken into chaos,

Thou hast created ! I have flown, somehow,

Upwards a thousand miles : my heart is crowned.

Your hands, good gentlemen ; sweet ladies, yours :

And what new godson of the bony death,

Of fire, or steel or poison, shall I make

For old Varini ?

Varin. Your allegiance, sirs,

Wanders Orazio is a beggar still

Batt. Is it not true then that the Duke is dead ?

Oraz. Not dead ? O slave !

Varin. The Duke is dead, my lords

And, on his death-bed, did bestow his crown

Upon his second brother, Lord Marcello—

Ours, and Ferrara's, Duke.

Oraz. I'll not believe it :

Marcello is abroad.

Varin. His blest return,

This providential day, has saved our lives

From thine abhorred sway Orazio, go

Aud, though my clemency is half a crime,

I spare your person.

Oraz. I'll to the palace.

When we meet next, be blessed if thou dost kiss

The dust about my ducal chair.

[Exit.]

Varin. I shall be there,
To cry Long live Marcello ! in thine ear.—
Pray pardon me the breaking of this feast,
Ladies—and so, good-night.

Rosaur. Your wish is echoed by our inmost will :
Good night to Count Varin. *[Exeunt guests.]*

Attend. My lord—

Varin. What are they, sirrah ?

Attend. The palace-keys.

There is a banquet in the inner room :

Shall we remove the plate ?

Varin. Leave it alone :

Wine in the cups ^{shines} its shadow—^{uncovered,} if ^{the} of flame
And the round ^{lamb} self—could melt ^{it}
Upon its brink, ^{let} on his rugged shoulder,
And grey with incense,
And velvet curtains ⁱⁿ banquets of Olympus,
The doors and gates, wide ⁱⁿ whole Niles of waters,
Foxes, and owls, and snakes ^{as} that hour
Let the bats nestle in the ^{gates} destroyed the
The shaggy brutes stretch on ^{the}
The serpent twine him o'er an ^{angry} ches,
Delicate chords—to Night, and all its ^{shell,} 's
We do abandon this accursed house. ^{ne ;} *[Exeunt.]*

ACT II

SCENE I. *An apartment in VARINI'S palace.*

Enter VALERIA and a female attendant.

Attend. Will you not sleep, dear lady ? you are
weary,

And yet thus eager, quick, and silently,
Like one who listens for a midnight sign,
You wander up and down from room to room,

With that wide, sightless eye, searching about
For what you know not. Will you not to bed ?

Valer. No, not to-night : my eyes will not be closed,
My heart will not be darkened. Sleep is a traitor :
He fills the poor, defenceless eyes with blackness,
That he may let in dreams. I am not well ;
My body and my mind are ill-agreed,
And comfortlessly strange, faces and forms
And pictures, friendly to my life-long knowledge,
Look new and unacquainted every voice
Is hollow every word inexplicable,
And yet they seem to be a guilty riddle,
And every place though unknown as a desert,
Feels like the spot where a forgotten crime
Was done by me in sleep. Night, O be kind !
I do not come to watch thy secret acts,
Or thrust myself on Nature's mysteries
At this forbidden hour bestow thy dews,
Thy calm, thy quiet sweetness, sacred mother,
And let me be at ease !

Now thou kind girl,
Take thy pale cheeks to rest

Attend. I am not weary
Believe me now, I am not.

Valer. But, my child,
Those eyelids, tender as the leaf of spring,
Those cheeks should lay their roseate delicacy
Under the kiss of night, the feathery sleep ;
For there are some, whose study of the morn
Is ever thy young countenance and hue.
Ah maid ! you love.

Attend. I'll not deny it, madam.
O that sweet influence of thoughts and looks !
That change of being which, to one who lives,
Is nothing less divine than divine life
To the unmade ! Love ? Do I love ? I walk
Within the brilliance of another's thought,

As in a glory. I was dark before,
As Venus' chapel in the black of night ;
But there was something holy in the darkness,
Softer and not so thick as other where ;
And, as rich moonlight may be to the blind,
Unconsciously conoling. Then love came,
Like the out-bursting of a trodden star,
And what before was hueless and unseen
Now shows me a divinity, like that
Which, raised to life out of the snowy rock,
Surpass'd mankind's creation, and repaid
Heaven for Pandora.

Valer. Innocently thought,
And worthy of thy youth ' I should not say
How thou art like the daisy in Noth's meadow
On which the foremost drop of rain fell warm
And soft at evening ; so the little flower
Wrapped up its leaves and shut the treacherous water
Close to the golden welcome of its breast,
D lighting in the touch of that which led
The shower of oceans, in whose billowy drops
Tritons and lions of the sea were warring.
And sometimes ships on fire sunk in the blood
Of their own inmates ; others were of ice
And some had islands rooted in their waves
Beasts on their rocks and forest-powdering winds,
And showers tumbling on their tumbling self,
And every sea of every ruined star
Was but a drop in the world-melting flood.

Attend. Lady, you utter dreams.

Valer. Let me talk so :
I would o'erwhelm myself with any thoughts.
Aye, hide in madness from the truth. Persuade me
To hope that I am not a wretched woman,
Who knows she has an husband by his absence,
Who feels she has a father by his hate,
And wakes and mourns, imprisoned in this house,

The while she should be sleeping, mad, or dead.
Thou canst, and pity on thine eyelid hangs,
Whose dewy silence drops consent —thou wilt !
I've seen thee smile with calm and gradual sweetness,
As none, that were not good, could light their cheeks :—
Thou wilt assist me Harden not those lips,
Those lovely kissings let them not be stone
With a denial !

Attend But your father's anger—
The watchful faith of all the servants—

Valer.

Fear not :

Lend me thy help O come—I see thou wilt.
Husband, I'll lay me on thine aching breast
For once and ever.—Haste! for see, the light
Creates for earth its day once more, and lays
The star of morn's foundation in the east.
Come—come—

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

Place before the ducal palace

Guards driving ORAZIO from the gate

Guard. Back ! desperate man : you cannot pass—

Oraz. By heaven, I must and will:

Guard. By the Duke's order,

The gates are locked on all to-day.

Orax.

By mine,

By the Duke's brother's order, or his force,
Open at once yon gates. Slave, by my blood,
But that I think thou know'st me not, I'd make
That corpse of thine my path. Undo, I say,
The knitting of this rebel house's arms,
And let their iron welcome be around me.
My sword is hungry : do't.

Guard. Advance no further :
Another step, and all our swords shake hands
Within your breast

Oraz. Insolent worm of earth,
To earth and worms for this ! *[He draws his sword.*

Guard. Strike all ! strike strong !
Strike through him right. *[They fight.*

Enter EZRIL from the palace

Ezr. Peace, on your lives, you traitors !
What ! would you stain the holy throne of justice,
The pure and peaceful temple of the law,
The sacred dwelling of Ferrara's soul,
With the foul juices of your drunken veins ?
Put up your impious swords.

Guard. Pardon our hasty and forgetful choler
We but defend our Duke against the outrage
Of this intemperate brawler.

Oraz. Cut him to shreds, and fling him to the dogs.
You wait upon the Duke, sir ?

Ezr. I am one
Of Lord Marcello's followers.

Oraz. Pray you then,
Speak to your Lord Marcello : let him know
These house-dogs, these his ducal latch-holders
Dare keep the bolt against his brother's knock.

Ezr. Are you then— ?

Oraz. I am Lord Orazio.
Be quick ! O nature, what a snail of men !
The morn is frosty, sir : I love not waiting.

Ezr. Now all the mercy of the heavens forbid
That thou should'st be that rash and wretched neighbour
Of the Duke's crown, his brother !

Oraz. Marcello is my brother ; I am his ;
If coming of one mother brother us :
He is the Duke, and I Orazio ;
He elder, younger I. If Jove and Neptune,

And the third Pluto, being Saturn's boys,
Lying in Rhea's womb and on her breast,
Were therefore brethren, so are he and I—
Marcello's mother's son, his grandame's grandson,
Marcello's father's babe, his uncle's nephew,
His nephew's uncle, brother of his brother,
Or what you like—if this same word of brother
Sours the sore palate of a royal ear

Ezr. Better thou wert the brother of his foe
Than what thou art, a man of the same getting ;
As, out of the same lump of sunny Nile,
Rises a purple-winged butterfly,
And a cursed serpent crawls

Oraz. Heart-withered, pale-scalped grandfather of
lies !
Age-hidden monster ! Tell me what thou meanest,
And then I'll stab thee for thy falsehood.

Ezr. Hold him !
Your swords between us ! Now, the Duke condemns
thee ,

And by his mother's, and his father's grave,
And by the dead, that lies within this palace,
His brother's sacred corpse, he dreadly swears ;
And by the heaven those three loved souls
Dwell and are blest in, twice he dreadly swears :
By which dread oath, and hate of all thy crimes,
The Duke condemns thee, mixing in his sentence,
Sweet mercy, tearful love, and justice stern,
To banishment for ever from this hour.

Oraz. O reddest hour of wrath and cruelty !
Banished ! Why not to death ?

Ezr. The pious hope,
That bitter solitude and suffering thought
Will introduce repentance to thy woes,
And that conduct thee to religious fear
• And humbleness, the lark that climbs heaven's stairs
But lives upon the ground : Go forth, Orazio ;

Seek not the house or converse of a citizen,
But think thyself outside the walls of life ;
If in Ferrara, after this decree,
Your darkest, deepest, and most fearful fear
Falls on thy shoulder, digs beneath thy feet,
And opens hell for thee. So, pass away !

Oraz. Stay, for an instant ; listen to a word :
O lead me to his throne ! Let me but look
Upon the father in my brother's face !
Let me but speak to him this kindred voice,
Our boyish thoughts in the familiar words
Of our one bedroom ; let me show to him
That picture which contains our double childhood,
Embracing in inexplicable love,
Within each other's, in our mother's arms ,
Thou'lt see rejoicing, O thou good old man,
The rigour melting through his changed eyes
Of his heart's roots, between whose inmost folds
Our love is kept.

Escr. Impossible and vain !
Content thee with thy doom, and look for love
Over the sea-wide grave. Let us be gone !

[Exit with guards.]

Oraz. Let me write to him, send a message to him,
A word, a touch, a token ! old, benevolent man,
Stay with me then to comfort and advise .
Leave one of these beside me : throw me not
Alone into despair ! He's gone ; they're gone ;
They never will come back ; ne'er shall I hear
The sweet voice of my kinsmen or my friends :
But here begins the solitude of death.
I was—I am ; O what a century
Of darkness, rocks, and ghostly tempest opens
Between those thoughts ! Within it there are lost
Dearest Valeria, Marcello, whose heart came
From the same place as mine, and all mankind ;
Affection, charity, joy : and nothing's cast

Upon this barren rock of present time,
Except Orazio's wreck ! here let it lie.

[*Throws himself down.*]

Enter VARINI and attendants

Varin. Not in the city ? Have you asked the guards
At bridge and gate—the palace sentinels ?

Attend. We have—in vain they have not seen her
pass.

Varin. And did you say Valeria, my Valeria,
Heaven's love, earth's beauty ?

Oraz. (*Starting up*) Mine eternally !
Let heaven unscabbard each star-hilted lightning,
And clench ten thousand hands at once against me—
Earth shake all graves to one, and rive itself
From Lybia to the North ! in spite of all
That threatens, I will stun the adulterous gods—
She's mine ! Valeria's mine ! dash me to death—
From death to the eternal depth of fire—
I laugh and triumph on the neck of fate :
For still she's mine for ever ! give me her,
Or I will diag thee to a seaside rock,
That breaks the bottoms of the thunder-clouds,
And taking thee by this old, wicked hair,
Swing thee into the winds.

Varin. I would, wild man,
That I could quench thine eyes' mad thirst with her.
She's gone, fled, lost. O think not any more
Let us forget what else is possible—
Yea hope impossibly ! the city streets,
The quay, the gardens—is there yet a place
Within night's skirt unsearched ?

Oraz. The wood of wolves :

Varin. Merciful god ! that frightful forest grows
Under the darksome corner of the sky
Where death's scythe hangs : its murder-shading trees
Are hairs upon Hell's brow. Away : away !

And never dare to turn on me again
Those eyes, unfilled with—speak to me never,
Until you cry—‘ Behold Valeria ! ’
And drop her on my bosom.

Oraz. We’ll wind the gordian paths off the trees’
roots,

Untie the hilly mazes, and seek her
Till we are lost. Help, ho ! *[Exit with attendants.*

Varin. Blessings of mine

Feather your speed ! and my strong prayers make
breaches

Through the air before you !

[He sits down on the palace-step.

Now I’ll close my eyes,

And, seated on this step, await their coming.
Strange and delightful meetings, on strange lands,
Of dead-esteemed friends have happened oft,
And such a blessed and benevolent chance
Might bring her here unheard ; for on the earth
She goes with her light feet, still as the sparrow
Over the air, or through the grass its shade.
Behind me would she steal, unknown, until
Her lip fell upon mine. It might be so :
I’ll wait awhile, and hope it.

Enter VALERIA

Valer. I know not what it means. None speak to
me :

The crowded street, and solid flow of men,
Dissolves before my shadow and is broken.
I pass unnoticed, though they search for me,
As I were in the air and indistinct
As crystal in a wave. There lies a man—
Shall I entreat protection and concealment,
And thaw the pity of his wintry head ?
—No time : they come like arrows after me :
I must avoid them.

[Exit.

Enter EZRIL and attendants

Ezr. Pursue, o'ertake, stay, seize that hurrying girl :
Muffle her face and form, and through the byeways
Convey her to the palace. Hasten hounds ! [*Exeunt.*

Varin. Thou magical deceiver, precious Fancy !
Even now, out of this solitude and silence,
Seemed—it was thy creation—music flowing,
And a conviction of some unseen influence ;
I could have pointed to that empty spot,
And said, there stands the presence of my daughter !
The air seemed shaken by that voice of hers—
But 'tis all hushed. [*Some of his attendants return.*
How now ? speak some of yon.

What's here ?

Attend. A veil and mantle.

Varin. Both Valeria's !

Where's she they should have wrapped ?

Attend. 'Twas all we found.

Varin. Where ?

Attend. On the grass this purple cloak was dropped,
Beside the river

Varin. And the veil—which way ?

Further on shore, or near those deadly waves ?

Attend. The veil, my lord—

Varin. 'Tis drenched and dropping wet :

Would I were drowned beside her ! thou wert white ;
And thy limbs' wond'rous victory over snow
Did make the billows thirsty to possess them.
They drank thee up, thou sweet one, cruelly !
Who was in heaven then ?

*Enter ORAZIO and attendants, bearing a corpse
that is carried up the stage*

Oraz. My love, art dead ?

Wilt thou not ope thy lips, lift up thine eyes ?

It is the air, the sun—

Attend. (*To Varini*) We've found the corpse.

Oraz. Her corpse! O no! she is Valeria still:
She's scarce done living yet: her ghost's the youngest!
To-morrow, she'll be—Oh what *she* will be?
No she—a corpse, and then—a skeleton!

Varin. Hast looked upon her?

Attend. Death has marred her features—
So swollen and discoloured their delight,
As if he feared that Life should know her sweet one,
And take her back again.

Varin. If it be so,
I'll see her once: that beauty being gone,
And the familiar tokens altered quite,
She's strange—a being made by wicked Death,
And I'll not mourn her. Lead me to the corpse
[*Exit with attendants.*]

Oraz. Henceforth, thou tender pity of mankind,
Have nought to do with weeping: let war's eyes
Sweat with delight; and tears be ta'en from grief,
And thrown upon the rocky cheek of hate!
For mark! that water, the soft heap of drops,
Water, that feigns to come from very heaven
In the round shape of sorrow, that was wont to wash
Sin from the new-born babe, is hard and bloody,
A murderer of youth; cold death to those
Whose life approved thy godhead, piteous virtue!

Enter EZRIL and guards

Ezr. Here still, unhappy man? then take the doom
You woo so obstinately. To the dungeon,
To the deepest chamber of the dayless rock—
Away, and down with him!

Oraz. I care not whither.
Thou canst not drag me deeper, wrap me darker,
Or torture me as my own thoughts have done.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

SCENE I. *A room in the ducal palace*MARCELLO *alone*

Marc I have them all at last ; swan-necked
Obedience ;

And Power that strides across the muttering people,
Like a tall bridge and War the spear-maned dragon :
Such are the potent spirits he commands,
Who sits within the circle of a crown !
Methought that love began at woman's eye :
But thou, bright imitation of the sun,
Kindlest the frosty mould around my heart-roots,
And, breathing through the branches of my veins,
Makest each azure tendril of them blossom
Deep, tingling pleasures musically hinged
Dropping with starry sparks, goldenly honied,
And smelling sweet with the delights of life.
At length I am Marcello

E. A. EZRIL

Ezr. Mighty Duke
Ferrara's nobles wait on you, to proffer
The homage of their coronets.

Marc. I shall not see them.

Ezr. It was the ancient usage of the state,
In every age.

Mars. Henceforth, be it forgotten !
I will not let the rabble's daily sight
Be my look's playmate Say unto them Ezril,
Their sovereigns of foretime were utter men
False gods that beat an highway in their thoughts
Before my car ; idols of monarchy,
Whose forms they nught behold. Now I am come,
Be it enough that they are taught my name.

Permitted to adore it, swear and pray
 In it and to it : for the rest I wrap
 The pillared caverns of my palace round me,
 Like to a cloud, and rule invisibly
 On the god-shouldering summit of mankind.
 Dismiss them so.

Ezr. 'Tis dangerous,—

Marc. Begone !

Each minute of man's safety he does walk
 A bridge, no thicker than his frozen breath,
 O'er a precipitous and craggy danger
 Yawning to death ! [Exit EZRIL.]

A perilous sea it is,
 'Twixt this and Jove's throne, whose tumultuous waves
 Are heaped, contending ghosts ! There is no passing,
 But by those slippery, distant stepping-stones,
 Which frozen Odin trod, and Mahomet,
 With victories harnessed to his crescent sledge,
 And building waves of blood upon the shallows,
 O'erpassed triumphant : first a pile of thrones
 And broken nations, then the knees of men,
 From whence, to catch the lowest root of heaven,
 We must embrace the winged waist of fame
 Or nest within opinion's palmy top
 'Till it has mixed its leaves with Ashes' hair
 Quicker to grow than verdant honours of Calmus—

Re-enter EZRIL

Ezr. They are departing with the unequal pace
 Of discontent and wonder.

Marc. Send them home
 To talk it with their wives : sow them with books
 Of midnight marvels, witcheries, and visions :
 Let the unshaven Nazarite of stars
 Unbind his wondrous locks, and grandame's earth-
 quake

Drop its wide jaw ; and let the churchyard's sleep
Whisper out goblins. When the fools are ripe
And gaping to the kernel, thou shalt steal,
And lay the egg of my divinity
In their fermenting sides. Where is my brother ?
The first I'll aim at.

Esr. 'Mid the poisonous dregs of this deep building,
Two days and their two nights have had his breath
All of one colour to his darkened eyes
No voice has fed his ears, and little food
His speech-robbed lips.

Marc. 'Tis well. This is a man
Whose state has sunk i' th' middle of his thoughts :
And in their hilly shade, as in a vale,
I'll build my church, making his heart the quarry.
Take him his meal, and place a guard around
The wood below the rest of my instructions,
For we must juggle boldly, shall be whispered
Secretly in my closet.

Esr. Will you not
First cast this ragged and unseemly garb,
And hang your sides with purple ?

Marc. No - these rags
Give my delight a sting. I'll sit in them ;
And, when I've stretched my dukedom through men's
souls,
Fix on its shore my chair, and from it bid
Their doubts lie down. Wilt help me ?

Esr. Duke, thou art
A fathomless and undiscovered man,
Thinking above the eagle's highest wings,
And underneath the world. Go on : command :
And I am thine to do.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

*A dungeon of Cyclopean architecture : ORAZIO
lying on the ground*

Enter MARCELLO and EZRIL

Marc. Thou hast her then, in secret and secure ?

Ezr. Not firmer or more quietly this body
Holds its existing spirit.

Marc. Excellent Ezril !

Thanks, thanks : my gratitude is snail-paced slow,
So heavy is its burthen See'st thou yonder ?

Ezr. The husband where his sorrow, strong in error,
Has spurned him down

Marc. I'll raise the broken man :
Aye, I will place my foot upon his soul,

And weigh him up. Leave us alone, good Ezril.

[Exit EZRIL.]

Lie there : I see the winding, darkening path
Into thine heart, its mouth and its recess,
As clear as if it were a forest's cavern,
Open to my approach. Henceforth be thou
Another habitation of my life
Its temple, its Olympus west in birth to
And pressing close beneath the unknown cloud
In which it reigns !

Ho ! sleep'st thou here ?

Mak'st thou the branch-dividing, light noon-air
Thy bedroom ? Rise ! what dost thou on the ground ?

Oraz. Didst thou say, Rise ? I stand. Where am
I now,
And how ?

Marc. Alive, and in Ferrara.

Oraz. Why, first there is a life, and then a death,
And then a life again, whose roof is death ;
So I have heard. 'Tis true : and though I am

Beside you, there's a grave divides our beings,
Which is the second gate of birth to me.
Leave me to weep and groan.

Marc. What ails thee thus ?
Thy nature is o'erturned, thy features all
Forget joy's offices. These sinking eyes,
Whose sight is but a secondary service.
The ashy hiding of thy cheeks—its cause ?

Oraz. Am I so like to marble in my form,
So wicked at the heart ? No, thou art bad
A charitable man would never ask.
And if thou e'er hadst love, or been once human,
Loved, grieved, or hoped, thou'dst feel what I have lost.
My wife is dead ! thou know'st not what I mean,
And therefore art accurst. Now let me weep.

Marc. Thou dost me wrong. Lament ! I'd have thee
do't :

The heaviest raining is the briefest shower.
Death is the one condition of our life :
To murmur were unjust, our buried sires
Yielded their seats to us, and we shall give
Our elbow-room of sunshine to our sons
From first to last the traffic must go on ;
Still birth for death. Shall we remonstrate then ?
Millions have died that we might breathe this day :
The first of all might murmur, but not we.
Grief is unmanly too.

Oraz. Because 'tis godlike.
I never felt my nature so divine,
As at this saddest hour. Thou'dst have me busy
In all the common usage of this world :
To buy and sell, laugh, jest, and feast, and sleep,
And wake and hunger that I might repeat 'em ;
Perchance to love, to woo, to wed again.

Marc. The wonted wheel.

Oraz. O how I hate thee for't !
I've passed through life's best feelings—they are her's ;

Humanity's behind me. Ne'er I'll turn,
But, consecrated to this holy grief,
Live in her memory : heaven has no more.

Marc. Yes, *she* is there. Let not thy woes be
impious,

Lest ye should never meet ; but anchor thee
On the remembrance that thou there wilt meet
Her deepest self, her spirit.

Oraz. Thou talk'st to me of spirits and of souls—
What are they ? what know I or you of them ?
I love no ghost : I loved the fairest woman,
With too much warmth and beauty in her cheek,
And gracious limbs, to hold together long.
To-day she's cold and breathless, and to-morrow
They'll lay her in the earth ; there she will crumble :
Another year no place in all the world,
But this poor heart, will know of her existence.
Can she come back, O can she ever be
The same she was last night in my embrace ?
No comfort else, no life !

Marc. She can.

Oraz. What didst thou speak ?
Blaspheme not nature : wake not hope to stab it .
O take not comfort's sacred name in vain !
Wilt say it now again ?

Marc. There is a way,
Which, if thy heart's religion could permit—

Oraz. What's that but she ? Do it, whate'er it is ;
I take the sin to me. Come, what will come—
And what but pain can come ?—for that will be
All paradise concentrate in a minute,
When she—but she is dead ; I saw her corpse ;
Upon my soul thou liest unfathomably :
No god could do it.

Marc. I have earned the taunt.
Seven heavens do fold the secret from thine eye :
Be happily incredulous. Perchance

It were a cursed and unhallowed rite :
Let's think it all a fiction. So farewell !

Oraz. Thou dost not go ; thou shalt not leave me
thus :

No ; by the power thou speakest of, I do swear
It shall be tried : if unsuccessful, then
We shall be what we are.

Marc. Not its success
I doubt, but its impiety. O be quick
To fear perdition !

Oraz. Can I fear aught further
Than what I feel ?

Marc. The sting of grief speaks here,
And not the tongue of thought. A month, a year
Pass in reflection : after such a time,
If thou demand'st the same, I'll then assist thee.

Oraz. What ? dost thou think I'll live another
month

Without her ? No. I did not seek this knowledge :
Thou hast created hope unbidden, in me ;
Therefore, I charge thee let it not be killed !
I pray not, I beseech thee not, again ,
But I command thee, by my right to bliss
Which I have lost in trusting thee, to do it,
Without an instant's loss.

Marc. Must it be so ?
To-morrow night in the Cathedral vault
Valeria will be buried : meet me there.

Oraz. Thou wilt not fail ?

Marc. I will not, on my life.

Oraz. Then she is mine again,
All and for ever.

Marc. (*Aside*) As thou shalt be mine.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I. *The Campo Santo. Night**Enter MARCELLO, EZRIL, and MELCHIOR leading VALERIA*

Valer. Whither, and by what law of man or nature,
Do ye thus lead me? Awe of sacred justice,
Dread of the clenched punishment that follows
The tremulous shoulder of pale, muffled guilt—
Do they not gaze from every silent bed
In this sad place?

Melch. Sheathe that nurse's tongue.
There's wooing 'twixt the moon and Death to-night:
This is his cabinet.

Marc. 'Beseech you, lady.
Break not this still submission, and so force us
To stir our power from 'ts feigned, complacent sleep.

Valer. Force! dost thou know me, that thou threaten'st force?

Melch. Why, thou'rt some wealthy sinner, very like,
Whose gloves are worn with lips of richest princes:—
It recks not here. The unfashionable worm,
Respectless of the crown-illumined brow,
The cheek's bewitchment, or the sceptred clench,
With no more eyes than Love, creeps courtier-like,
On his thin belly, to his food—no matter
How clad or nicknamed it might strut above,
What age or sex—it is his dinner-time.
—Now with what name, what coronal's shade, wilt
scare

Our rigour to the wing?

Valer. I have a plea,
As dewy-piteous as the gentle ghost's
That sits alone upon a forest-grave,
Thinking of no revenge: I have a mandate,

As magical and potent as e'er ran
Silently through a battle's myriad veins,
Undid their fingers from the hanging steel,
And drew them up in prayer : I AM A WOMAN.
O motherly remembered be the name,
And, with the thought of loves and sisters, sweet
And comforting ! therefore be piteous to me.
O let my hand touch yours ! I could do more
By its sad tremors than my tongue.

Melch.

Away !

We own a mood of marble. There's no earth
In any crevice of my well-built spirit,
Whence woman's rain could wake the weedy leaves
Of the eye-poison, pity.

Marc.

If I were

Another man than this, Nature's cast child,
Renounced by Life and Death of common men,
And placed by wrongs upon an island-peak,
Methinks I could relent.

Melch.

Draw up thyself.

This bearskin, charity, is a great coat
For ragged, shivering sin · thine Indian hate,
That shivers, like the serpent's noontide tongue,
With poisonous, candid heat, must trample on it.

Valer. O icy hearts ! but no ; soft ice doth melt,

And warms contritely—I renounce the words,
And roll away the tender side of Heaven
To bare its lightnings. I am innocent,
As white as any angel's lily wing ;
And if you wrong me, mark ! I will not weep,
Nor pray against your souls, nor curse your lives,
Nor let my madness wake all things that are
To roll destruction on you—but be silent,
Secret, as happiness, to man and God,
And let the judgment ripen silently,
Under your feet and o'er you—mighty, quiet,
Deadly and tedious, as a silent hell.

Now, what ye dare, begin !

Marc. Our purpose glides,
Calm and remorseless as this human orb,
Whose moon, thou see'st, bestows an equal beam
Upon the odorous gardens we passed by,
And the gaunt lips of this new-opened grave.
Canst thou reproach our want of charity,
Beholding this, and all the thoughts it lends ?

Melch. 'Tis a fit oracle for such an hour,
And has the caverns of its inspirations,
More true than Delphian, underneath our being.
Let's speak to it.

Ezr. What would'st thou ?

Melch. It may teach
This tremulous lady resignation, sir.
Ho, there ! thou maker of this earthen bed ;
Thou porter of the gates, art thou below ?
Whose grave is this thou digg'st ?

* * * * *

Cetera desunt

TORRISMOND
AN UNFINISHED DRAMA

PERSONS REPRESENTED

DUKE OF FERRARA.

TORRISMOND ; his son.

The Marquis MALASPINA.

CYRANO ; his son.

AMADEUS ; a young nobleman.

GARCIA ;

GOMEZ ;

MELCHIOR ;

GAUDENTIO ;

} Courtiers.

VERONICA ; Malaspina's daughter.

ELVIRA ; her attendant.

ERMINIA ; Melchior's sister.

SCENE ; Ferrara.

TORRISMOND

ACT I

SCENE I *An apartment in the ducal palace*

Enter the DUKE, courtiers, and attendants

Duke. Who has seen Torrismond, my son, to-night ?

Garcia. My lord, he has not crossed me, all the day.

(To Gomez aside) You need not say we saw him pass the terrace,

All red and hot with wine. The duke is angry :
Mark how he plucks his robe.

Duke. Gomez, nor you ?

Gomez. Your Grace, in Garcia's answer
Beheld the face of mine. I have not lent him
A word to-day.

Duke. Nor you ? none of you, sirs ?
No answer ! have ye sold yourselves to silence ?
Is there not breath, or tongue, or mouth among you,
Enough to croak a curse ? Nay : there's no wonder.
Why do I ask ? that know you are his curs,
His echo-birds, the mirrors of his tongue.
He has locked up this answer in your throats,
And scratched it on your leaden memories.
What do I ask for ? well : go on, go on ;
Be his sop-oracles, and suck yellow truth
Out of the nipple of his jingling pouch.
But tell me this, dogs, that do wag your tails

Round this dwarf Mercury, this gilded Lie-god,
Will you set out and beg with him to-morrow?

Garcia. Why, my good lord?

Duke. Because, my evil slave—
Because unless he can these sunbeams coin,
Or, like a bee in metals, suck me out
The golden honey from their marly core,
He's like to board with the cameleon :
Because I will untie him from my heart,
And drop him to the bottom of the world :
Because I'll melt his wings. Enough !

Garcia. With pardon,
You are too rough.

Duke. Too rough ! were I as loud
As shaggy Boreas in his bearish mood,
Did I roll wheels of thunder o'er your souls,
And break them into groans—weep yourselves waves,
And kneel beneath my storming. Worms ye are,
Born in the fat sides of my pouring wealth :
Lie there and stir not, or I dash you off.

Garcia. My lord—

Duke. I am no lord, sir, but a father :
My son has stuck sharp injuries in my heart,
And flies to hide in your obscurity.
Cover him not with falsehoods, shield him not,
Or, by my father's ashes—but no matter.
You said I was a duke I will be one,
Though graves should bark for it. You've heard me
speak :

Now go not to your beds until my son
(—It is a word that cases not a meaning—)
Come from his riots : send him then to me :
And hark ! ye fill him not, as ye are wont,
To the lip's brim with oily subterfuges.
I sit this evening in the library.

An Attend. Lights, lights there for the duke !

Duke. For the duke's soul I would there were a light !

Well ; on thy flinty resolution strike,
Benighted man ! The sun has laid his hair
Up in that stone, as I have treasured love
In a cold heart ; but it begins to boil,
And, if it breaks its casket, will be out.
Find me a book of fables ; he, whose world
Grows in his thoughts, methinks, alone is happy,
So now good-night ; and do as I have said.

Garcia. We shall. Good dreams, your Grace !

Duke. Good acts, you mean.

He who does ill, awake, and turns to-night
For lovely painted shades,
Is like a satyr grinning in a brook
To find Narcissus' round and downy cheek.

[*Exit with attendants : manent GARCIA and GOMEZ.*]

Gomez. I never saw my lord so sad and angry ;
His blood foamed, white with wrath, beneath his face,
Rising and falling like a sea-shore wave.
What boils him thus ?

Garcia Perhaps some further outrage
Reported of his son , for the young lord,
Whose veins are stretched by passion's hottest wine,
Tied to no law except his lawless will
Ranges and riots headlong through the world ,
Like a young dragon, on Hesperian berries
Purplely fed, who dashes through the air,
Tossing his wings in gambols of desire,
And breaking rain-clouds with his bulging breast.
Thus has he been from boy to youth and manhood,
Reproved, then favoured ; threatened, next forgiven ;
Renounced, to be embraced : but, till this hour,
Never has indignation like to this,
With lightning looks, black thoughts, and stony words,
Burst o'er the palace of their love, which stretches
From heart to heart.

Gomez. I fear that both will shake ;
And that fair union, built by interchange

Of leaning kindnesses, in the recoil
May fall between, and leave no bridge for pardon.

Garcia. The little that we can, then let us strive
To hold them in the lock of amity :
For which our thoughts let us compare within.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

A banqueting room in MALASPINA'S palace

CYRANO, AMADEUS, TORRISMOND, and other young
lords, drinking

Amad. Another health ! Fill up the goblets, sirrah !
This wine was pressed from full and rolling grapes
By the white dance of a Circassian princess,
Whose breast had never aught but sunlight touched,
And her own tears : 'tis spicy, cool, and clear
As is a magic fount where rainbows grow,
Or nymphs by moonlight bathe their tremulous limbs ;
And works an intellectual alchemy,
Touching the thoughts to sunshine. Now, to whom—
To what young saint, between whose breathing paps
Love's inspiration lies, shall we devote
This last and richest draught with whose soft name
Shall we wash bright our hearts ? Say, Cyrano.

Cyran. Let Torrismond be sponsor for this bowl.
He sate so still last night, that by plump Cupid,
That merry, cherry-lipped, delicious god,
Whose name is writ on roses, I must think
He's paid ~~away his~~ ^{away his} soul in broken sighs,
Glass oaths, and teakiss. Ask him, what name,
For one quick finger-kiss. Madè to be written up on hearts and trees,
And grace a sonnet, shall be sugar here,

Making the juice steam music.

Torris. I beseech you,
Waste not this Araby of words on me :
I'm dull, but not in love.

Cyran. Not ancle-deep ?
What means a leaning head, eyelids ajar,
And lips thick-sown with whispers ? Sir, I say,
Before to-morrow you'll be soused in love,
To the ear's tip. In truth, it will be so ;
Sure as an almanac

Torris. I lay my fate
Upon your mercy . e'en tie love-knots in it,
If you've nought else to do. Good Cyrano,
And you, sirs, all pray drink. I fear the fog
Of my most stupid dulness spreads.

Amad. We'll drink
One cup—one more liquid delight, my friends ;
Then for the masquerade at Signor Paulo's.

Cyran. Aye ; dedicated to the sweet To be,
The lady Future of our comrade's love.

A guest What rhymes unborn are shut within that
word !

Amad. Thus then I soak my heart's dear roots in
wine,
And the warm drops roll up and down my blood,
Till every tendril of my straying veins
Rings with delight. *[They drink.]*

And now, my sons of Bacchus,
To the delirious dance ! Nay, Torrismond,
You'll come with us at least.

Torris. To-night, I thank you,
It is against my will ; indeed I cannot ;
I'm vilely out of tune, my thoughts are cracked,
And my words dismal. 'Pray you, pardon me :
Some other night we will, like Bacchanals,
Shiver the air with laughter and rough songs,
And be most jovial madmen.

Amad. Be it so,
If be it must. We bid, you, sir, farewell.

Torris. Good-night, good lads.

[*Exeunt AMADEUS and others : manent TORRIS-
MOND and Cyrano.*]

Now go, dear Cyrano ;

Let me not keep you by my wayward mood.

Cyran. If it does not offend you, suffer me—

Torris. Offend me ! No ; thou dost not, Cyrano ;
I do offend myself. Hadst thou but eyes
To see the spirit toiling in this breast,
How low a wretch should I appear to thee ;
How pitifully weak ! Now tell me, sir—
I shrink not from the truth, although it stab.
And beg it from your mouth—what think you of me ?

Cyran. Of you, my lord ?

Torris. Yes, yes ; my words, my manners,
My disposition, will—how seem they to you ?

Cyran. Sir, my heart speaks of you as one most kind ;
Spirited and yet mild : a man more nobl
Breathes not his Maker's air.

Torris. Stay, my good friend ;
I did not ask for flattery.

Cyran. Nor I answer it ;
Saying, that here I shake him by the hand
That has no better in humanity :
A fine, free spirit.

Torris. You had better say
A whirring, singing, empty wine-bubble,
Like one of these that left us. So I was ;
Vain, futile, frivolous : a boy, a butterfly—
In semblance : but inside, by heaven ! a depth
Of thoughts most earnest, an unfuelled flame
Of self-devouring love. *Cyrano, Cyrano,*
I yearn, and thirst, and ache to be beloved,
As I could love, through my eternal soul,
Immutably, immortally, intensely,

Immeasurably. Oh! I am not at home
In this December world, with men of ice,
Cold sirs and madams. That I had a heart,
By whose warm throbs of love to set my soul
I tell thee I have not begun to live,
I'm not myself, till I've another self
To lock my dearest, and most secret thoughts in;
Change petty faults, and whispering pardons with;
Sweetly to rule, and Oh! most sweetly serve.

Cyran. Have you no father, nor a friend? Yet I,
I, Torrismond, am living, and the duke.

Torris. Forgive me, sir, forgive me: I am foolish;
I've said I know not what, I know not why;
'Tis nothing—fancies; I'll to bed; 'tis nothing;
Worth but a smile, and then to be forgotten.
Good-night: to-morrow I will laugh at this.

Cyran. I'll say no more but that I hope you will.
[Exit.

Torris. I knew it would be so. He thinks me now
Weak, unintelligible, fanciful—
A boy shut up in dreams, a shadow-catcher:
So let him think. My soul is where he sees not,
Around, above, below. Yes, yes; the curse
Of being for a little world too great,
Demanding more than nature has to give,
And drinking up, for ever and in vain,
The shallow, tasteless skimmings of their love,
Through this unfathomable fever here.
A thought of comfort comes this way; its warmth
I feel, although I see it not. How's this?
There's something I half know; yes, I remember,
The feast last night: a dear, ingenuous girl
Poured soft, smooth hope upon my dashing passions,
Until they tossed their billowy selves to sleep.
I'll seek her, try her: in this very garden
Often she walks; thither I'll bear my wishes,
And may she prove the echo of their craving! [Exit.

SCENE III

A garden by moonlight

VERONICA, ELVIRA, and other female attendants

Veron. Come then, a song ; a winding, gentle song,
To lead me into sleep. Let it be low
As zephyr, telling secrets to his rose,
For I would hear the murmuring of my thoughts ;
And more of voice than of that other music
That grows around the strings of quivering lutes ;
But most of thought ; for with my mind I listen,
And when the leaves of sound are shed upon it,
If there's no seed remembrance grows not there.
So life, so death ; a song, and then a dream !
Begin before another dewdrop fall
From the soft hold of these disturbed flowers,
For sleep is filling up my senses fast,
And from these words I sink.

Song

How many times do I love thee, dear ?
Tell me how many thoughts there be
In the atmosphere
Of a new-fall'n year,
Whose white and sable hours appear
The latest flake of Eternity :
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love again ?
Tell me how many beads there are
In a silver chain
Of evening rain,
Unravell'd from the tumbling main,
And threading the eye of a yellow star :
So many times do I love again.

Elvira. She sees no longer : leave her then alone,
Encompassed by this round and moony night.
A rose-leaf for thy lips, and then good-night :
So life, so death ; a song, and then a dream !

[*Exeunt ELVIRA and attendants, leaving VERONICA
asleep.*]

Enter TORRISMOND

Torris. Herself ! her very self, slumbering gently !
Sure sleep is turned to beauty in this maid,
And all the rivalry of life and death
Makes love upon her placid face. And here,
How threads of blue, wound off yon thorny stars
That grow upon the wall of hollow night,
Flow o'er each sister-circle of her bosom,
Knotting themselves into a clue for kisses
Up to her second lip. There liquid dimples
Are ever twinkling, and a sigh has home
Deep in their red division—a soft sigh,
Scarce would it bow the summer-weeds, when they
Play billows in the fields, and pass a look
Of sunshine through their ranks from sword to sword,
Gracefully bending. On that cheek the blush
That ever dawns dares be no common blush,
But the faint ghost of some dishevelled rose
Unfurls its momentary leaves, and bursts
So quick the haunted fairness knows it not.
O that this gaze could be eternity !
And yet a moment of her love were more.
Were there infection in the mind's disease,
Inoculation of a thought, even now
Should she, from all the windings of her dream,
Drink my impetuous passion, and become
All that I ask. Break from your buds, dear eyes,
And draw me into you.

Veron. (*Awaking*) Who's there ? I dreamt :
As I do love that broad, smooth-edged star,

And her young, vandyked moons that climb the night
Round their faint mother, I would not have had
Another eye peeping upon that dream,
For one of them to wear upon my breast ;
And I'll not whisper it, for fear these flags
Should chance to be the green posterity
Of that eaves-dropping, woman-witted grass,
That robbed the snoring wasps of their least voice,
To teach their feathery gossips of the air
What long, and furry ears king Midas sprouted ;
And I'll not think of it, for meditation
Oft presses from the heart its inmost wish,
And thaws its silence into straying words.

Torris. (*Aside*) I am no man, if this dream were not
spun

By the very silkworm, that doth make his shop
In Cupid's tender wing-pit, and winds fancies
In lovers' corner thoughts, when grandam Prudence
Has swept the hearth of passion, thrown on cinders,
And gone to bed :—and she is not a woman,
If this same secret, buried in her breast,
Haunt not her tongue—and hark ! here comes its
ghost.

Veron. A fable and a dream ! Here, in this garden,
It seemed I was a lily—

Torris. (*Aside*) So you are,
But fitter for Arabian paradise,
Or those arched gardens where pale-petalled stars,
With sunlight honeying their dewy cores,
Tremble on sinuous, Corinthian necks,—
Where Morn her roses feeds, her violets Night.

Veron. And to my lily-ship a wooer came,
Sailing upon the curvous air of morn,
(For 'twas a sunny dream, and a May sky
The lid of it) ; and this imagined suitor,
A glass-winged, tortoise-shell, heart-broken bee,
Was—he you know of, heart. How did he bend

His slender knee, doffing his velvet cap,
And swearing, by the taste of Venus' lip,
If I did not accept his airy love,
The truest heart, that ever told the minutes
Within an insect's breast, should shed its life
Around the hilt of his unsheathed sting.
And then this tiny thunderer of flowers,
Quite, quite subdued, let down a string of tears,
(Little they were, but full of beeish truth),
Almost a dewdrop-much, on the fair pages
Of transmigrated me, whereon, O Love !
Thou tamed'st the straightest prude of Flora's daughters ;
For I did pity Torrismond the bee.
And let him, if his life lived in my love,
Have that for courtesy.

Torris. (Coming forward) O lady ! then
Will you deny him now ? when here he kneels,
And vows by heaven, and by the sacred souls
Of all the dead and living, in your pity
His hope is tolded, in your soul his love,
And in that love his everlasting life.

Veron. Out on my tongue, the naughty runaway !
What has he heard ? Now, if this man should be
Vain, selfish, light, or hearted with a stone,
Or worthless any way, as there are many,
I've given myself, like alms unto an idiot,
To be for nothing squandered.

Torris. Lady, speak !
And for my truth, O that my mind were open,
My soul expressed and written in a book,
That thou might'st read and know ! Believe, believe
me !

And fear me not, for, if I speak not truth,
May I speak never more, but be struck dumb !
May I be stripped of manhood and made devil,
If I mean not as truly unto thee,

Though bold it be, as thou unto thyself !
I will not swear, for thou dost know that easy :
But put me to the proof, say, ' kill thyself ' ;
I will outlabour Hercules in will,
And in performance, if that waits on will.
Shall I fight sword-less with a youthful lion ?
Shall I do aught that I may die in doing ?
Oh ! were it possible for such an angel,
I almost wish thou hadst some impious task,
That I might act it and be damned for thee.
But, earned for thee, perdition's not itself,
Since all that has a taste of thee in it
Is blest and heavenly.

Veron. Stop ! You frighten me .

I dare not doubt you.

Torris. Dare not ? Can you so ?

Veron. I dare not, for I cannot. I believe you :
It is my duty.

Torris. To the dutiful
Their duty is their pleasure. Is it not ?

Veron. 'Twas a rash word ; it rather is my fate.

Torris. It is my fate to love ; thou art my fate,
So be not adverse.

Veron. How can I say further ?
I do believe you : less I'll not avow,
And more I cannot.

Torris. Stay, Veronica !
This very night we both of us may die,
Or one at least : and it is very likely
We never meet ; or, if we meet, not thus,
But somehow hindered by the time, the place,
The persons. There are many chances else,
That, though no bigger than a sunny mote,
Coming between may our whole future part.
With Milo's force tear our existence up,
And turn away the branches of each life,
Even from this hour, on whose star-knotted trunk

We would engraft our union ; it may sever us
As utterly as if the world should split
Here, as we stand, and all Eternity
Push through the earthquake's lips, and rise between us.
Then let us know each other's constancy :
Thou in my mind, and I in thine shall be ;
And so disseparable to the edge
Of thinnest lightning

Veron. Stav · be answered thus
If thou art Torrismond, the brain of teather ,
If thou art light and empty Torrismond,
The admiration, oath, and patron-saint
Of frivolous revellers, he whose corky heart,
Pierced by a ragged pen of Cupid's wing,
Spins like a vane upon his mother's temple
In every silly sigh—let it play on .

Torris. It is not so ; I vow, Veronica.

Veron. If you unpeopled the Olympian town
Of all its gods, and shut them in one oath,
It would not weigh a flue of melting snow
In my opinion Listen thus much more
If thou art otherwise than all have held
Except myself , if these which men do think
The workings of thy true concentrate self,
Have been indeed but bubbles raised in sport
By the internal god, who keeps unseen
The fountains of thine undiscovered spirit ;
If, underneath this troubled scum of follies,
Lies what my hopes have guessed—why guess thy
wishes,

What it may be unto Veronica.

Torris. What need of doubts and guesses ? make
me firm ;

With fixed assurance prop my withering hopes,
Or tear them up at once ; give truth for truth.
I know it is the custom to dissemble,
Because men's hearts are shallow, and their nature

So mean, ill-nurtured, selfish, and debased,
They needs must paint and swaddle them in lies,
Before the light could bear to look upon them.
But as thou art, thus unalloyed and fresh
From thy divine creation, soul and body,
Tread artifice to dust, and boldly speak
Thine innocent resolve.

Veron. Thus then I say :
As I believe thee steadfast and sincere,
(And, if it be not so, God pity me !)
I love thee dearly, purely, heartily ;
So witness heaven, and our own silent spirits !

Torris. And by my immortality I swear,
With the like honesty, the like to thee,
Thou picture of the heavens !

Veron. Hark ! some one comes :
Now we must part. Henceforth remember thou,
How in this azure secrecy of night,
And with what vows, we here have dedicated
Ourselves, and our eternity of being,
Unto each other in our Maker's presence.
Good-night, then, Torrismond.

Torris. And such to thee,
As thou to me hast given, fairest fair !
Best good ! of thy dear kind most ever dear !
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV

An apartment in the ducal palace

Enter the DUKE and courtiers

Duke. Yes, was it not enough, good Garcia,
Blood spilt in every street by his wild sword ;
The reverend citizens pelted with wrongs,
Their rights and toil-won honours blown aside,

Torn off, and trampled 'neath his drunken foot ;
The very daughters of the awful church
Smeared in their whiteness by his rude attempts ;
The law thus made a lie even in my mouth ;
Myself a jest for beer-pot orators ;
My state dishonoured—was it not enough
To turn a patience, made of ten-years' ice,
Into a thunderbolt ?

Garcia. It was too much
I wonder at your Grace's long endurance
Did you ne'er chide him ?

Duke. No, never in his life ;
He has not that excuse. My eyes and ears
Were frozen-closed. Yet was it not enough
That his ill deeds outgrew all name and number,
O'erflowed his years and all men's memories ?
Gaudentio, I was mild ; I bore upon me
This world of wrongs, and smiled. But mark you now,
How he was grateful. Tell them, Melchior.

Melch. Linked, as it is surmised, with Lutherans,
And other rebels 'gainst his father's state,
He has not only for their aid obtained
From me, the steward of the dukedom, money,
But also robbed, most treacherously robbed,
By night, and like a thief, the public treasury.

Gauden. I'll not believe it ; and he is a villain,
Aye, and the very thief, that did the thing,
Who brings the accusation.

Duke. Knave, I think
Thou wert my son's accomplice.

Melch. Nay, my lord,
He says what all would say, and most myself,
But that these facts—

Gauden. What facts ? What witnesses ?
Who saw ? Who heard ? Who knows ?

Duke. Our trusty steward.

Gauden. A Spanish Jew ! a godless, heartless exile,

Whose ear's the echo of the whispering world.
Why, if *he* only knows, and saw, and heard,
This Argus-witness, with his blood-hound nose,
Who keeps a fairy in his upright ear,
Is no more than a black, blind, ugly devil
Nick-named a lie.

Duke. Be silent, slave, or dead.
I do believe him : Garcia, so dost thou ?
All honest men, good Melchior, like thyself—
For that thou art, I think, upon my life—
Believe thee too.

Melch. It is my humble trust :
And, in the confidence of honesty,
I pray you pardon this good servant's boldness.
(*Aside*) God help the miserable velvet fellow !
It seems he has forgot that little story,
How he debauched my poor, abandoned sister,
And broke my family into the grave.
That's odd ; for I exceeding well remember it,
Though then a boy.

Duke. Gaudentio, thou dost hear
Why I forgive thee : but be cautious, sir.

Gauden. Cautious, but honest, cautious of a villain.

Duke. No more ! But see where comes the man we
talk of.

Leave us together.

[*Exeunt courtiers.*]

Enter TORRISMOND

Torrismond, well met !—

Torris. Why then well parted, for I'm going to bed.
I'm weary ; so, good-night.

Duke. Stay ; I must speak to you.

Torris. To-morrow then, good father, and all day
But now no more than the old sleepy word,
And so again, good-night.

Duke. Turn, sir, and stay :
I will be brief, as brief as speech can be.

Seek elsewhere a good night : there is none here.
This is no home for your good nights, bad son,
Who hast made evil all my days to come,
Poisoned my age, torn off my beauteous hopes
And fed my grave with them. Oh ! thou hast now,
This instant, given my death an hundred sinews,
And drawn him nearer by a thousand hours.
But what of that ? You'd sow me like a grain,
And from my stalk pick you a ducal crown.
But I will live

Torris ~~That~~ That you may live and prosper
Is every day my prayer, my wish, my comfort.
But what offence has raised these cruel words ?

Duke. That I may live, you plot against my life ;
That I may prosper, you have cured my fortunes
Of their encrusted jaundice—you have robbed me.
So, for your prayers and wishes I do thank you ;
But for your deeds I wish and pray Heaven's vengeance.

Torris. Is this your own invention, or—O nature !
O love of fathers ! could a father hear
His offspring thus accused, and yet believe ?
Believe ! Could he endure, and not strike dead,
The monster of the lie ? Sir, here or there,
In you, or your informers, there's a villain,
A fiend of falsehood : so beware injustice !

Duke. I never was unjust, but when I pardoned
Your bloody sins and ravening appetites—
For which Heaven pardon me, as I repent it !
But I'll not play at battledore with words.
Hear me, young man, in whom I did express
The venom of my nature, thus the son,
Not of my virtuous will, but foul desires,
Not of my life, but of a wicked moment,
Not of my soul, but growing from my body,
Like thorns or poison on a wholesome tree,
The rank excrescence of my tumid sins—
And so I tear thee off : for, Heaven doth know,

All gentler remedies I have applied ;
But to this head thy rankling vice has swelled,
That, if thou dwellest in my bosom longer,
Thou wilt infect my blood, corrode my heart,
And blight my being : therefore, off for ever !

Torris. O mother, thou art happy in thy grave !
And there's the hell in which my father lies,
The serpent that hath swallowed him !

GAUDENTIO rushes in

Gauden. (*As he enters, to those without, the other courtiers, who also enter but remain at the side*) Away !
Let me come in ! . . . Now, I beseech you, lords,
Put out this anger ; lay a night of sleep
Upon its head, and let its pulse of fire
Flap to exhaustion. Do not, sir, believe
This reptile falsehood : think it o'er again,
And try him by yourself ; thus questioning,
Could I, or did I, thus, or such a fault,
In my beginning days ? There stands before you
The youth and golden top of your existence,
Another life of yours : for, think your morning
Not lost, but given, passed from your hand to his.
The same except in place. Be then to him
As was the former tenant of your age,
When you were in the prologue of your time,
And he lay hid in you unconsciously
Under his life. And thou, my younger master,
Remember there's a kind of god in him,
And after heaven the next of thy religion.
Thy second fears of God, thy first of man,
Are his, who was creation's delegate,
And made this world for thee in making thee.

Duke. A frost upon thy words, intended dog !
Because thy growth has lost its four-legged way
And wandered with thee into man's resemblance,

Shalt thou assume his rights ? Get to thy bed,
Or I'll decant thy pretext of a soul,
And lay thee, worm, where thou shalt multiply.
Sir slave, your gibbet's sown.

Torris. Leave him, Gaudentio,
My father and your master are not here ;
His good is all gone hence, he's truly dead ;
All that belonged to those two heavenly names
Are gone from life with him, and changing cast
This slough behind, which all abandoned sins
Creep into and enliven devilishly.

Duke What ! stand I in thy shadow ? or has
Momus
Opened a window 'twixt thy heart and mine ?
'Tis plated then !

Torris. We talk like fighting boys :
Out on't ! I repent of my mad tongue.
Come, sir ; I cannot love you after this,
But we may meet and pass a nodding question—

Duke Never ! There lies no grain of sand between
My loved and my detested Wing thee hence,
Or thou dost stand to-morrow on a cobweb
Spun o'er the well of clotted Acheron,
Whose hydrophobic entrails stream with fire ;
And may this intervening earth be snow,
And my step burn like the mid coal of Ætna,
Plunging me, through it all, into the core
Where in their graves the dead are shut like seeds,
If I do not—O but he is my son !
If I do not forgive thee then—but hence !
Gaudentio, hence with him, for in my eyes
He does look demons

Melch. (To *Torrismond*) Come out with me and
leave him .
You will be cool, to-morrow.

Torris. That I shall ;
Cool as an ice-drop on the skull of Death,

For winter is the season of the tomb,
And that's my country now.

Duke. Away with him !
I will not hear. Where did I leave my book ?
Or was it music ? Take the beggar out.
Is there no supper yet ? O my good Melchior !
I'm an eternal gap of misery.
Let's talk of something else.

Torris. O father, father ! must I have no father,
To think how I shall please, to pray for him,
To spread his virtues out before my thought,
And set my soul in order after them ?
To dream, and talk of in my dreaming sleep ?
If I have children, and they question me
Of him who was to me as I to them,
Who taught me love, and sports, and childish lore ;
Placed smiles where tears had been ; who bent his talk,
That it might enter my low apprehension,
And laughed when words were lost. O father, father !
Must I give up the first word that my tongue,
The only one my heart has ever spoken ?
Then take speech, thought, and knowledge quite away,
Tear all my life out of the universe,
Take of my youth, unwrap me of my years,
And hunt me up the dark and broken past
Into my mother's womb there unbeget me ;
For 'till I'm in thy veins and unbegun,
Or to the food returned which made the blood
That did make me, no possible lie can ever
Unroot my feet of thee. Canst thou make nothing ?
Then do it here, for I would rather be
At home nowhere, than here nowhere at home.

Duke. Why ask'st thou me ? Hast thou no deeds
to undo,
No virtues to rebuy, no sins to loose ?
Catch from the wind those sighs that thou hast caused ;
Out of large ocean pick the very tears,

And set them in their cabinets again.
Renew thyself, and then will I remember
How thou camest thus. Thou art all vices now
Of thine own getting. My son Torrismond
Did sow himself under a heap of crime,
And thou art grown from him : die to the root,
So I may know thee as his grave at least.
Now, Melchior, we'll away.

Melch. Not yet, my lord :

I wait upon this gentleman

Duke Is't so ?

Why then, begone ! Good-morrow to you, sirs
Farewell ! and be that word a road to death
Uncrossed by any other ! Not a word !

*[Exit with courtiers : manent TORRISMOND and
MELCHIOR.]*

Melch. Will you not stay ?

He's gone : but follow not :

There's not a speck of flesh upon his heart !
What shall we do ?

Torris What shall we do ?—why, all,

How many things, sir, do men live to do ?

The mighty labour is to die we'll do't,

But we'll drive in a chariot to our graves,

Wheel'd with big thunder, o'er the heads of men.

[Exeunt.]

Cætera desunt

DRAMATIC SCENES AND FRAGMENTS

DRAMATIC SCENES AND FRAGMENTS

I. ERMINIA ABBANDONATA

ERMINIA and female attendant

Attend. Come lift your head from that sad pillow, lady,
Let comfort kiss thee dry Nay, weep no more :
Oh ! sure thy brain has emptied all its tears,
Thy breast outsigned its passion, leaving room
For sleep to pour her sweetness into them,
And the cored sleep of sleep, tranquillity,
That opens but one window of the soul,
And, with her hand on sorrow's face, does keep her
Dark in her bed and dayless. Quiet now—
Will you take peace ?

Ermin. Good-night ; you must go in :
The door of life is shut upon me now ;
I'm sepulchred alone. Look in the west ;
Mark you the dusty, weary traveller,
That stumbles down the clouds ?

Attend. I see the sun
Silently dying.

Ermin. Weep till your sight is found.
I have been one that thought there was a sun,
A joyful heat-maker ; and, like a child
By a brook's side spooning the sparkles out,
I caught at his reflection in my soul,

And found 'twas water painted with a lie,
Cold, bitter water ; I have cried it out.
Sometimes you may see some one through the clouds
Stepping about the sky, and then, in sooth,
He robs some mountain of its child, the day,
And lays it at the sea's door . but for that
I' the west, 'tis the fat, unwholesome star,
The bald fool-planet, that has men upon it,
And they nickname it ' world ' .
And oh ! this lumpy bastard of the sun,
It was my slave, my dog, and in my lap
Laid down its load of pleasure every night,
And span me sunshine to delight my eyes,
Carried my cities and did make me summer,
And flower-limbed spring, and green and golden early
autumn :

In on the breast. For madness, though I hold it
Kinder to man's enjoyment than true sense,
And I would choose it, if they lay before me,
Even as a grape beside an adder's tongue,
To squeeze into my thoughts as in a cup,
Hating the forked and the bitter truth—
I cannot find it. If my brain were capable
Of this dear madness, should it not be now
All in a bubble with't? What can make mad,
If not the abandonment of one, whose love
Is more true life than the veins' crimson sap?
Leonigld has cut my heart away,
And flung it from him. if I could be so,
Should I not be tempestuously mad?

Attend. Alas! his cruelty looked like a snake
Upon Medusa's temple.

Ermin. Had I been waked
By torchlight in my eyes, and by a voice
That said 'your babes are burning, stabbed your husband—

Room on your bosom for their murderer's kisses!'
Why, that to this were tickling to a stab,
A pin-wound to an hell-jawed, laughing gash.
You saw me spurned by him who was—Oh! was—
What was he? not a father, son or husband—
Lend me a word.

Attend. Indeed your love was much;
Your life but an inhabitant of his.

Ermin. Loved him! 'tis not enough; the angels
might—

They might think what I mean, but could not speak it,
I dreamt it was the day of judgment once,
And that my soul, in fear of hidden sins,
Went with his stolen body on its shoulders,
And stood for him before the judgment-seat—
O that I now were damned as I was then!
But that same body, that same best-loved soul

Cursed, spurned me yesterday. Should I not rave,
Rave, my girl, rave ?

Attend. So most women would,
So all would wonder that another did not.

Ermin. Why now, I rave not, laugh not, think not,
care not ;

But it is well ; so far, I said, 'twas well.
Next was I not abandoned on the rock,
That I might starve ? and then you know I prayed,
And when 'twas done, behold ! there comes a boat,
Climbing about the waves ; I thought and said,
O bless thee, ocean ! hither dost thou come,
On the same errand as thy birds returning
Unto their hungry nest ; thus has sweet nature
Sown kindness in thy great, and its small, bosom !
And, as I spoke, the waves came sporting on,
And laid their burthen, like a pillow, here :
Look ! it's my brother dead. Should I not rave,
Rave, my girl, rave ? What comet-dragon is there,
That makes the air bleed fire with galloping rage,
But should be dove-like in my simile ?

Attend. Alas ! such things,
Such sudden pluckings by the heart as these,
People the madhouse, and cram up the grave !

Ermin. Therefore I laugh : methinks, when I do
tell it,
That I am supping up a draught of wine.
Would you know why there's death, and tears, and
blood,

And wrenching hearts out by their shrieking roots,
Which are more tender than the mailed quick,
Or the wet eyeball ? I will tell you this—
But O ! be secret as rocks under sea—
When the world draws the winter o'er his head,
Capping himself so whitely round his Alp,
Muffling his feet with ice, and beds him so ;
Then underneath the coverlid and cloak

He has a poisonous strumpet in his arms,
 On whom he gets confusion, war, disease,
 Prodigies, earthquakes, blights : she's in his blood,
 The hell-wombed witch, hagged and hideous nature !
 But I'll unwind her. Nay, I jest, my child :
 Leave me ; seek something—What is it we want ?
 O true ! 'tis food : take this, and try the huts.

Attend. 'Tis needful truly : I'll procure it quick,
 And turn the hour back I go upon
 A little then, good-bye.

[*Exit.*

Ermin. Yes, I do see
 The wronger, and will cut her from my heart,
 Pare myself of her utterly. Thou nature,
 Living or dead, thou influence or thou ruler,
 I invoke the heaven to hear my charge.
 Who tied my heart unto Leonigild
 With gordian love-knots of its thousand strings,
 Then tore them all away to bleed and wither ?
 Was it not nature ?
 Who quickened next that heart a lovely babe,
 And when its little smile had learnt its mother,
 When thought was rising in its heavenly eye,
 Bade the grave jump and snap it ? The same nature.
 Here lies a brother in my dead embrace,
 Loved after, as before, his human life ;
 For in each other's unborn arms we lay,
 Bedfellows in our mother. Who poisoned him,
 Alone among the horrible sea-waves,
 And then—O murderess above fratricide,
 To kill the sister with the brother's corpse !
 Sent him a gift to me ? Again 'twas nature.
 I had a husband ; nature widowed me :
 A child ; she kidnapped it to earth a tree :
 A brother ; him she murdered with her waves :
 Me she would madden therefore I defy,
 Curse, and abandon Nature henceforth ever.
 And, though I cannot creep up to my mother,

Or flow back to my father's veins again—
 Resex or nncreate me ; this much can I :
 I will sponge out the sweetness of my heart,
 And suck up horror ; woman's thoughts I'll kill,
 And leave their bodies rotting in my mind,
 Hoping their worms will sting ; although not man,
 Yet will I out of hate engender much,
 I'll be the father of a world of ghosts,
 And get the grave with a carcase. For the rest,
 I will encorpse me in my brother's garments,
 Pick me a heart out of a devil's side,
 And so, my own creator, my own child,
 Tread on the womb of nature, unbegotten.
 Now then, ye waves, I step on you again,
 And into my new self, my life outlived .
 Come back and kneel, thou world ; submit thy side,
 And take me on thy neck again, new-made,
 Fiend-hearted, woman-corpsed, but man-arrayed.

II. AN APOTHEOSIS

DIANE ME and female attendants

Dianeme. Sing on, sing ever, and let sobs arise
 Beneath the current of your harmony,
 Breaking its silvery stillness into gushes
 Of stealing sadness : let tears fall upon it,
 And burst with such a sound, as when a lute-string,
 Torn by the passion of its melody,
 Gasps its whole soul of music in one sound,
 And dies beneath the waves of its own voice !
 Be pale thou mooned midnight, and ye stars
 Shed flitting tremours of inconstant light
 Upon the moaning billows ; timid leaves
 O'erwhelm yourselves with shadow, and give out
 Your dewy titterings to the air no more !

Clouds, clouds, dark, deadly clouds, let not the moon
Look on his grave ! It is too light : the day
Will rise before I die : how old is evening ?

Attend. The tide of darkness now is at its height.
Yon hly-woven cradle of the hours
Hath floated half her shining voyage, nor yet
Is by the current of the morn opposed.

Dianeme. The hour is coming : I must give my soul
To the same moment on whose precious air
My Casimir soared heavenward, for I know
There are a million chambers of the dead,
And every other minute but the same
Would bear me to the one where he is not,
And that were madness. Bring me yon sick hly,
Yon fevered one.

Attend. Choose any other, lady,
For this is broken, odourless, and scorched,
Where Death has graved his curse.

Dianeme Give it to me ;
I'll weep it full I have a love for flowers :
Guess you not why ? Their roots are in the earth,
And, when the dead awake or talk in sleep,
These hear their thoughts and write them on their
leaves

For heaven to look on : and their dews come down
From the deep bosom of the blue, whereon
The spirits linger, sent by them perchance
With blessings to their friends. Besides all night
They are wide-waking, and the ghosts will pause,
And breathe their thoughts upon them. There, poor
blossom,

My soul bedews thee, and my breast shall be
Thy deathbed, and our deaths shall intertwine.
Now, maids, farewell ; this is the very echo
Of his expiring time , one snowy cloud
Hangs, like an avalanche of frozen light,
Upon the peak of night's cerulean Alp,

And yon still pine, a bleak anatomy,
Flows, like a river, on the planet's disk,
With its black, wandering arms. Farewell to all ;
There is my hand to weep on.

Now my soul
Developes its great beams, and, like a clond
Racked by the mighty winds, at once expands
Into a measureless, immortal growth.
Crescented night, and amethystine stars,
And day, thon god and glory of the heavens,
Flow on for ever ! Play, ye living spheres,
Through the infinity of azure wafted
On billowy music ! Airs immortal, strew
Your tressed beauty on the clouds and seas !
And thou the sum of these, nature of all,
Thon providence pervading the whole space
Of measureless creation ; thon vast mind,
Whose thoughts these pageantries and seasons are,
Who claspest all in one imagination,
All hail ! I too am an eternity ;
I am an universe. My soul is bent
Into a girdling circle full of days ;
And my fears rise through the deep sky of it,
Blossoming into palpitating stars ;
And snns are launched, and planets wake within me ;
The words upon my breath are showery clouds,
Sailing along a summer ; Casimir
Is the clear truth of ocean, to look back
The beams of my soft love, the world to turn
Within my bine embrace. I am an heaven,
And he my breezes, rays, and harmony ;
'Round and around the curvous atmosphere
Of my own real existence I revolve,
Serene and starry with undying love.
I am, I have been, I shall be, O glory !
An universe, a god, a living Ever.

[*She dies.*

III. THE ISRAELITE AMID PHILISTINES

Enter EZRIL dragged in by two Venetians

Ezril. Help ! help, you kindly people of this place !
 Help for the helpless old ! Have mercy, sirs !
 Oh ! it is in your hearts, deny it not ,
 Shut not your ears to its enchanting tongue
 It will unlock a heaven in your souls,
 Wherein my pardon and my pity sits.
 I kneel to you, as you unto your god :
 Reject me not, teach him not cruelty.
 Be heavenly, as you can.

1st Venet. Hush ! frosty Jew !
 Or take my answer from this tongue of steel.

Ezril. When you are old, and fearful,
 With age's wintry winds shaking your limbs,
 Thus may you cry, thus may you wring your hands—

1st Venet. And thus be struck. Once more have
 silence with thee

Or death possess me if I stab thee not
 Now comrade, shall we let the coward live ?

2nd Venet. Wilt thou betray us, dotard ?

Ezril. By my life,
 If you will grant me it to swear upon,
 Never !

1st Venet. It is a rubbed and brittle oath,
 As what 'tis sworn : break one, thou breakest both.
 I'll snap thy being like a frozen breath,
 If thou breathest falsely.

Ezril. If I kill my truth,
 Drive thy revenge into my midmost heart.

1st Venet. Hark, once again ! Where wert thou
 journeying, Jew,
 With gold-stuffed panniers, thus ?

Ezril. To Venice town.

Alas ! remind me not of my dear riches,
 The beauteous jewels of my bosom ; take them.
 I would that I were stouter in my soul,
 That I dared die ! Be gentle with the sacks ;
 They're full of fair, white silver : as I tied them,
 I felt their strings run tickling through my veins.

1st Venet. O ho ! here's royal booty, on my soul :
 A draught of ducats ! By this silver sight :
 I love thee, bushy dog, and thou shalt live
 To sweep the corners of men's souls again.
 Be comforted. Let's toss them on our shoulders,
 And swim the Po

2nd Venet. First, look you here, old man :
 There's a clenched hand , dost see ?

Ezril. 'Tis hard as iron !
 (*Aside*) Hell melt it so !

2nd Venet. And in't a sword :

Ezril. (*Aside*) As sharp as are the teeth
 Of my heart's father, a fierce curse of thee—
 What then, sir ?

2nd Venet. Speak once of us,
 Look after us, or press that foot of thine
 Upon yon lip of Po, where Venice grows—
 They're in thy muddy body to the wrist.

[*Exeunt* VENETIANS.]

Ezril. The weight of Atlas' shoulder slip upon you !
 The waves smile, do they ? O, that they would laugh,
 Open their liquid jaws and shut them on you !
 These are but thieves, the emptiers of my soul—
 These, that have scooped away my sweetest kernel,
 My gathered seed of kingdom-shading wealth,
 Crown-blossomed, sword-leaved, trunked with strug-
 gling armies,

And left the wrinkled skin upon my arms—
 These are but thieves ! And he that steals the blood,
 A murderer is he ? Oh ! my thoughts are blunt :
 I'll throw away the workings of my tongue,

Till I've the craft to make a curse so long,
 Fangish enough to reach the quick of earth,
 That hell whose flaming name my feelings echo,
 And rouse it for them.

Death ! here comes a man
 To stare into my ruin.

Enter MARCELLO

Marcello. Hail, country of my birth
 We're met in season, winter in us both,
 The fruit picked from us poor and snowy-scalped,
 And almost solitary I did turn
 An ermined shoulder on thee, when I stepped
 Out of thine airy door of earth and sky,
 Upon that watery threshold ;
 And now I face thee with a ragged front :
 A coin of Fate's cross-stamp that side a Duke,
 And this, which Time turns up (so hell might stick
 Upon the back of heaven), a scratched despair !

* * * * *

IV. LOVERS' IDENTITY

Erminia. Is it Zenobio ?

Zenobio. Aye, that's my body's name, for my dear
 soul

Is not so called when you would speak of that,
 Which is myself more than the thing you see,
 Only say ' Erminia '. And what readeth she,
 Who called Zenobio ?

Erminia. An unhappy tale
 Of two who loved, with so unusual faith,
 That their affection rose up into heaven
 And there was deified (for the blind child,
 Whom men of this late world invoke and swear by,
 Is the usurper of that first love's name
 Indeed an idol, a false deity):
 —A pedant's dream !

Zenobio. We know it to be so.
 For not externally this love can live,
 But in the soul, as life within the body ;
 And what is Love alone ? Are there not two ?
 —But, dearest, you were telling—

Erminia. Of this pair :
 One from the beauty and the grace of youth,
 One, innocent and youthful, perished.
 The other—what could she, O widowed thing !
 With but a pale and fading memory
 Left in the hollow of her heart ?

Zenobio. What could she ?
 But let her deathly life pass into death,
 Like music on the night-wind ; moaning, moaning,
 Until it sleeps.

Erminia. Worse, worse, much worse than that,
 Or aught else of despair or common madness.
 Cheerfully did she live, quietly end
 A joyous age alone ! This is to me
 More woeful, and more murderous of hope,
 Than any desperate story.

Zenobio. So it would be,
 If thought on with the general sense of man
 But know this surely : in that woman's breast
 Lived the two souls, that were before divided
 For otherwise, be sure, she *could* not live ;
 But so, much happier than ever.

V. PRISON THOUGHTS

Scene, a dungeon : ORAZIO solus

Orazio. I'll speak again :
 This rocky wall's great silence frightens me,
 Like a dead giant's.
 Methough I heard a sound ; but all is still.
 This empty silence is so deadly low,

The very stir and winging of my thoughts
 Make audible my being . every sense
 Aches from its depth with hunger.
 The pulse of time is stopped, and night's blind sun
 Sheds its black light, the ashes of noon's beams,
 On this forgotten tower. whose ugly round,
 Amid the fluency of brilliant morn,
 Hoops in a blot of parenthetic night
 Like ink upon the crystal page of day,
 Crossing its joy ' But now some lamp awakes,
 And, with the venom of a basilisk's wink,
 Burns the dark winds Who comes ?

Enter EZRIL

Ezril. There's food for thee.
 Eat heartily ; be mirthful with your cup ;
 Though coarse and scanty.

Orazio. I'll not taste of it.
 To the dust, to the air with the cursed liquids
 And poison-kneaded bread.

Ezril. Why dost thou this ?
Orazio. I know thee and thy master honey-lipped,
 Viper-tongued villain, that dost bait intents,
 As crook'd and murderous as the scorpion's sting,
 With mercy's sugared milk, and poisonest
 The sweetest teat of matron charity !

* * * * *

VI. MAN'S PETTY UNIVERSE CONTRASTED WITH THE TRUE

SCENE : *the abyss of Space* : AMBROSIOUS and CYNTHIA
in the car, returning to the earth. Ambrosius loquitur

O WHAT a deep delight it is to cleave,
 Out-darting thought, above all sight and sound,
 And sweep the ceiling of the universe,
 Thus with our locks ! How it does mad the heart,

How dances it along the living veins,
 Like hot and steaming wine ! How my eyes ache
 With gazing on this mighty vacancy !
 O Universe of earth and air and ocean,
 Which man calls infinite, where art thou now ?
 Sooner a babe should pierce the marble ear
 Of death, and startle his tombed ancestor,
 'Mid Hell's thick laughter, shrieks, and flamy noises,
 With cradle-pulings, than the gathered voice
 Of every thunder, ocean, and wild blast,
 Find thee, thou atom, in this wilderness !
 This boundless emptiness, this waveless sea
 This desert of vacuity, alone
 Is great : and thou, for whom the word was made,
 Art as the wren's small goblet of a home
 Unto the holy vastness of the temple !

* * * * * * *

VII. RECOGNITION

SOFT ! Stand away ! those features—Do not stir !
 Be breathless if thou canst ! . . . The trembling ray
 Of some approaching thought, I know not what,
 Gleams on my darkened mind. It will be here
 Directly : now I feel it growing, growing,
 Like a man's shadow, when the sun floats slowly
 Through the white border of a baffled cloud :
 And now the pale conception furls and thickens.
 'Tis settled. Yes—Beroe ! How dare thy cheek
 Be wan and withered as a wrinkling moon
 Upon the tumbled waves ? Why camest thou here ?
 I dreamt of thee last night, as thou wert once,
 But I shall never dream of thee again.

VIII. RECEPTION OF EVIL TIDINGS

WHAT's this ? Did you not see a white convulsion
 Run through his cheek and fling his eyelids up ?

There's mischief in the paper.

Mark again !

How, with that open palm, he shades his brain
From its broad, sudden meaning. Once I saw
One who had dug for treasure in a corner,
Where he, by torchlight, saw a trembling man
Burying a chest at night. Just so he stood
With open striving lips and shaking hair ,
Alive but in his eyes, and they were fixed
On a smeared earthly bleeding corpse—his sister,
There by her murderer crushed into the earth.

IX. A RUFFIAN

THERE's a fellow
With twisting root-like hair up to his eyes,
And they are streaked with red and starting out
Under their bristling brows ; his crooked tusks
Part, like a hungry wolf's, his cursing mouth ;
His head is frontless and a swinish mane
Grows o'er his shoulders brown and warty hands,
Like roots, with pointed nails—He is the man.

X. RECOLLECTION OF EARLY LIFE

LEAF after leaf, like a magician's book
Turned in a dragon-guarded hermitage
By tress-dishevelling spirits of the air,
My life unfolds.

XI. A CROCODILE

HARD by the liled Nile I saw
A duskish river-dragon stretched along,
The brown habergeon of his limbs enamelled
With sanguine almandines and rainy pearl :

And on his back there lay a young one sleeping,
No bigger than a mouse ; with eyes like beads,
And a small fragment of its speckled egg
Remaining on its harmless, pulpy snout ;
A thing to laugh at, as it gaped to catch
The baulking, merry flies. In the iron jaws
Of the great devil-beast, like a pale soul
Fluttering in rocky hell, lightsomely flew
A snowy troculus, with roseate beak
Tearing the hairy leeches from his throat.

XII. 'BONA DE MORTUIS

AYE, aye : *good man, kind father, best of friends—*
These are the words that grow, like grass and nettles,
Out of dead men, and speckled hatreds hide,
Like toads, among them.

XIII. ROSILY DYING

I'LL take that fainting rose
Out of his breast ; perhaps some sigh of his,
Lives in the gyre of its kiss-coloured leaves
O pretty rose, hast thou thy flowery passions
Then put thyself into a scented rage,
And breathe on me some poisonous revenge.
For it was I, thou languid, silken blush,
Who orphaned thy green family of thee,
In their closed infancy : therefore receive
My life, and spread it on thy shrunken petals,
And give to me thy pink, reclining death.

XIV. SPEAKER'S MEANING DIMLY DESCRIBED

I know not whether
I see your meaning : if I do, it lies

Upon the wordy wavelets of your voice,
Dim as an evening shadow in a brook,
When the least moon has silver on't no larger
Than the pure white of Hebe's pinkish nail.

XV. ANTICIPATION OF EVIL TIDINGS

I FEAR there is some maddening secret
Hid in your words, (and at each turn of thought
Comes up a skull), like an anatomy
Found in a weedy hole, 'mongst stones and roots
And straggling reptiles, with his tongueless mouth
Telling of murder.

XVI. MIDNIGHT HYMN

AND many voices marshalled in one hymn
Wound through the night, whose still, translucent
 moments
Lay on each side their breath, and the hymn passed
Its long, harmonious populace of words
Between the silvery silences, as when
The slaves of Egypt, like a wind between
The head and trunk of a dismembered king
On a strewn plank, with blood and footsteps sealed,
Vallied the unaccustomed sea.

XVII. CONCEALED JOY

Just now a beam of joy hung on his eyelash ;
But, as I looked, it sunk into his eye,
Like a bruised worm writhing its form of rings
Into a darkening hole.

XVIII. LIFE A GLASS WINDOW

LET him lean

Against his life, that glassy interval

'Twixt us and nothing ; and, upon the ground

Of his own slippery breath, draw hueless dreams,

And gaze on frost-work hopes. Uncourteous Death

Knuckles the pane, and * * *

XIX. A DREAM

LAST night I looked into a dream ; 'twas drawn

On the black midnight of a velvet sleep,

And set in woeful thoughts ; and there I saw

A thin, pale Cupid, with bare, ragged wings

Like skeletons of leaves, in autumn left

That sift the frosty air One hand was shut,

And in its little hold of ivory

Fastened a May-morn zephyr, frozen straight,

Made deadly with a hornet's rugged sting,

Gilt with the influence of an adverse star.

Such was his weapon, and he traced with it,

Upon the waters of my thoughts, these words :

' I am the death of flowers, and nightingales,

And small-lipped babes, that give their souls to summer

To make a perfumed day with I shall come,

A death no larger than a sigh to thee,

Upon a sunset hour '. And so he passed

Into the place where faded rainbows are,

Dying along the distance of my mind ;

As down the sea Europa's hair-pearls fell

When, through the Cretan waves, the curly bull

Dashed, tugging at a stormy plough, whose share

Was of the northern hurricane—

XX. METAPHOR OF RAIN

AN amorous cloud

Lets down her rustling hair over the sun.

XXI. MEDITATION

THE bitter past
And the untasted future I mix up,
Making the present a dream-figured bowl
For the black poison, which is caked and moulded,
By the inside of the enchasing thoughts,
Even as I taste it.

XXII. SWEET TO DIE

Is it not sweet to die ? for, what is death,
But sighing that we ne'er may sigh again,
Getting at length beyond our tedious selves ;
But trampling the last tear from poisonous sorrow,
Spilling our woes, crushing our frozen hopes,
And passing like an incense out of man ?
Then, if the body felt, what were its sense,
Turning to daisies gently in the grave,
If not the soul's most delicate delight
When it does filtrate, through the pores of thought,
In love and the enamelled flowers of song ?

XXIII. EXTREME ACCLIVITY

ITS impossible ascent was steep,
As are the million pillars of a shower
Torn, shivered, and dashed hard against the earth,
When Day no longer breathes.

XXIV. RAIN

THE blue, between yon star-nailed cloud
The double-mountain and this narrow valley,
Is strung with rain, like a fantastic lyre.

XXV. LIFE'S UNCERTAINTY

A. THE king looks well, red in its proper place
The middle of the cheek, and his eye's round
Black as a bit of night.

B. Yet men die suddenly :
One sits upon a strong and rocky life,
Watching a street of many opulent years,
And Hope's his mason. Well ! to-day do this,
And so to-morrow ; twenty hollow years
Are stuffed with action : lo ! upon his head
Drops a pin's point of time : tick ! quoth the clock,
And the grave snaps him

A. Such things may have been
The crevice 'twixt two after-dinner minutes,
The crack between a pair of syllables
May sometimes be a grave as deep as 'tis
From noon to midnight in the hoop of time.
But for this man, his life wears ever steel
From which disease drops blunted. If indeed
Death lay in the market-place, or were—but hush !
See you the tremble of that myrtle bough ?
Does no one listen ?

B. Nothing with a tongue
The grass is dumb since Mabel's foot did sop
Translates the crow or the raven. When the myrtle
Sits a hen-robin to nest and like a star,
Over her brittle eggs

A. Is it no more ?

B. Nought ; let her hatch

XXVI. KISSES

Her kisses are
Soft as a snow-tuft in the dewless cup
Of a redoubled rose, noiselessly falling
When heaven is brimful of starry night.

XXVII. SUBTERRANEAN CITY

CAN it then be, that the earth loved some city,
 Another planet's child, so long, so truly,
 That here we find its image next her heart,
 Like an abandoned, melancholy thought
 Yet legible ?

XXVIII. DREAM OF DYING

SHIVERING in fever, weak and parched to sand,
 My ears, those entrances of word-dressed thoughts,
 My pictured eyes, and my assuring touch,
 Fell from me, and my body turned me forth
 From its beloved abode : then I was dead ;
 And in my grave beside my corpse I sat,
 In vain attempting to return : meantime
 There came the untimely spectres of two babes,
 And played in my abandoned body's ruins ;
 They went away ; and, one by one, by snakes
 My limbs were swallowed ; and, at last, I sat
 With only one, blue-eyed, curled round my ribs,
 Eating the last remainder of my heart,
 And hissing to himself. O sleep, thou fiend !
 Thou blackness of the night ! how sad and frightful
 Are these thy dreams !

XXIX. INSIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORLD

WHY what's the world and time ? a fleeting thought
 In the great meditating universe,
 A brief parenthesis in chaos.

XXX. SLEEPER'S COUNTENANCE CONTEMPLATED

Duke. There smiles methinks
 A cherished dream, that lies upon her lips
 As the word love deep written in a rose,

With which the story of our youth begins.
Could'st thou but see whose image so delights her !

Ziba. Her thoughts are far from us in early childhood :

For 'tis our wont to dream of distant friends
And half-forgotten times.

D. L. B.

XXXV. SORROW

SORROW ! Hast thou seen Sorrow asleep,
When thick sighs break the wholeness of her mouth,
And one tear trembles in her upward eye,
Part clammy on the dark threads of her lash,
Part yet witlun her dream ? One moony night
I found her so, a pale, cold babe, and beauteous,
In slumber, as Consumption, just before
She's christened Death. I pressed her in my arms,
And took upon my lip the hurrying tear
Of her warm neck

XXXVI. SAD AND CHEERFUL SONGS
CONTRASTED

SING me no more such ditties they are well
For the last gossips, when the snowy wind
Howls in the chimney till the very taper
Trembles with its blue flame, and the bolted gates
Rattle before old winter's palsied hand.
If you will sing, let it be cheerily
Of dallying love. There's many a one among you
Hath sung, beneath our oak trees to his maiden,
Light bird-like mockeries, fit for love in springtime.
Sing such a one.

D. I. B.

XXXVII. A SUBTERRANEAN CITY

I FOLLOWED once a fleet and mighty serpent
Into a cavern in a mountain's side ;
And, wading many lakes, descending gulfs,
At last I reached the ruins of a city,
Built not like ours but of another world,
As if the aged earth had loved in youth
The mightiest city of a perished planet,

And kept the image of it in her heart,
So dream-like, shadowy, and spectral was it,
Nought seemed alive there, and the bony dead
Were of another world the skeletons.
The mammoth, ribbed like to an arched cathedral,
Lay there, and ruins of great creatures else
More like a shipwrecked fleet, too vast they seemed
For all the life that is to animate
And vegetable rocks, tall sculptured palms,
Pines grown, not hewn, in stone; and giant ferns,
Whose earthquake-shaken leaves bore graves for no stars.
D. L. B.

XXXVIII. MAN'S ANNID — BUT IN THE — 'AT
GUARD AGAINST DEATH

There is some secret stirring in the world,
A thought that seeks impatiently its word :
A crown, or cross, for one is born to-day.

XL THE SLIGHT AND DEGENERATE NATURE OF MAN

Antediluvianus loquitur

PITIFUL post-diluvians ! from whose hearts
The print of passions by the tide of hours
Is washed away for ever and for ever,
As lions' footmark on the ocean sands ;
While we, Adam's coevals, carry in us
The words indelible of buried feelings,
Like the millennial trees, whose hoary barks
Grow o'er the secrets cut into their core.

XLI. A NIGHT-SCENE

THE lake, like her, heaves gently
Its breast of waves under a heaven of sleep,
And pictures in its soothed, transparent being
The depth of worlds o'erhanging : o'er the pillow,
Washed by the overflowing, flowery locks,
A silver promise of the moon is breathed :
And the light veil of hieroglyphic clouds
The curious wind rends ever and anon,
Revealing the deep dream of Alpine heights,
Which fill the distance of its wondering spirit,
And on its hectic cheeks the prophecies
Do fearfully reflect, that flicker up
Out of the sun's grave underneath the world.

To the world's use. That instrnment is broken,
 And in another sphere the spirit works,
 Which did appropriate to human functions
 A portion of the ghostly element.
 This then is all your Death

XLIV A GREAT SACRIFICE SELF- COMPENSATED

TRUE I have had much comfort gazing on thee,
 Much too perhaps in thinking I might have thee
 Nearly myself, a fellow soul to live with.
 But, weighing well man's frail and perilous tenure
 Of all good in the restless, wavy world,
 Ne'er dared I set my soul on any thing
 Which but a touch of time can shake to pieces.
 Alone in the eternal is my hope.
 Took I thee ? that intensest joy of love
 Would soon grow fainter and at last dissolve.
 But, if I yield thee, there is something done
 Which from the crumbling earth my soul divorces,
 And gives it room to be a greater spirit.
 There is a greater pang, methinks, in nature
 When she takes back the life of a dead world
 Than when a new one severs from her depth
 Its bright, revolving birth. So I'll not hoard thee,
 But let thee part, reluctant, though in hope
 That greater happiness will thence arise.

XLV. 'LOVE IS WISER THAN AMBITION'

Amala. O give not up the promise of your time
 For me : for what ? an evanescent woman,
 A rose-leaf scarce unfolded ere it falls. Your days
 Should be a wood of laurels evergreen ;
 Seek glory !

For pity's dewy eyelid closing over
 Love's sparkles. I have seen the mottled tigress
 Sport with her cubs as tenderly and gay,
 As lady Venus with her kitten Cupids ;
 And flowers, my sagest teachers, beautiful,
 Or they were fools, because death-poisonous :
 And lies, methinks, oft brighten woman's lips,
 And tears have the right pearly run and diamond shoot
 When they bowl down false oaths World I will win
 thee ,

Therefore I must deceive thee, gentle World.
 Let Heaven look in upon my flaming wrath
 As into Ætna's hell : the sides man sees
 I clothe with olives, promising much peace.
 But what's this talk ? Must I be one of those
 That cannot keep a secret from himself ?
 The worst of confidants, who oft goes mad,
 Through bites of conscience, after many years.
 I came to see thee, brother : there thou art
 Even in this suit, from which no blood, save his,
 This purple dobed by thy imperial life
 Shall wash away To the amazed foe
 I will appear thyself returned, and smite him
 Ere he has time to doubt or die of horror.
 I would I were, thus iron-hooped and sworded,
 Thy murderer's dream this night, to cry, Awake !
 Awake, Duke Melveric ! Duke Murderer !
 Wrap thee up quickly in thy winding sheet,
 Without ado ! The hearse is at the door,
 The widest gate of Hell is open for thee,
 And mighty goblins summon thee to Death
 Come down with me ! [*He seizes the sleeping DUKE*]
 Nay, I will shake thy sleep off,
 Until thy soul falls out.

 What voice more dreadful
 Than one at midnight, blood-choaked, crying murder ?
 Why, Murder's own ! His murder's, and now thine

As of crime's beacon. Thou shalt see thy son
 Fall for a woman's love, as thy friend fell,
 Beneath the stabs of him, with whom together
 He was at one breast suckled. Thou shalt lose
 Friends, subjects, crown, strength, health and all power,
 Even despair ; thou shalt not dare to break
 All men's contempt, thy life, for fear of worse :
 Nor shalt thou e'er go mad for misery
 Write on. I leave the voice with thee, that never
 Shall cease to read thee o'er and o'er, thy doom.
 It will the rest the worst of all, repeat
 Till it be written

Thou art doomed : no trumpet
 Shall wake the bravery of thy heart to battle ;
 No song of love, no beam of child's glad eye,
 Drown that soft whisper, dazzle from thy sight
 Those words indelible.

Follow him, dearest curse ;
 Be true to him, invisible to others,
 As his own soul [Exit.
Duke Hold ' mercy ' . . 'Tis enough . . .
 Curse shoulders curse as in a bloody river
 I will no more. D. I. B.

XLVII. HUMAN LIFE : ITS VALUE

THINK, what I plead for : for a life ! the gift
 Of God alone, whom he, who saves't, is likest.
 How glorious to live ! Even in one thought
 The wisdom of past times to fit together,
 And from the luminous minds of many men
 Catch a reflected truth ; as, in one eye,
 Light, from unnumbered worlds and farthest planets
 Of the star-crowded universe, is gathered ⁱⁿ
 Into one ray. D. I. B.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

ALFARABI; THE WORLD-MAKER

Ahapsjunal fragment

'Twas in those days
That never were, nor ever shall be, reader,
But on this paper ; golden, glorious days,
Such as the sun (poor fellow ! by the way,
Where is he ? I've not seen him all this winter),
Never could spin days, as I said before,
Which shall be made as fine as ink can make them ;
So, clouds, avaunt ! and Boreas, hence ! to blow
Old Ætna's porridge. We will make the sun
Rise, like a gentleman, at noon, clasped round
With the bright armour of his May-day beams ;
The summer-garland on his beaming curls,
With buds of palest brightness ; and one cloud—
Yes, (I'm an Englishman), one snow-winged cloud,
To wander slowly down the trembling blue ;
A wind that stops and pants along the grass,
Trembles and flies again, like thung pursued ;
And indescribable, delightful sounds,
Which dart along the sky, we know not whence ;
Bees we must have to hum, shrill-noted swallows
With their small, lightning wings, to fly about,
And tilt against the waters. that will do.
And now, dear climate, only think what days
I'd make if you'd employ me : you should have

A necklace, every year, of such as this ;
Each bead of the three hundred sixty five—
(Excuse me, puss, (&) I couldn't get you in),
Made up of sunshine, moonshine, and blue skies :
Starlight I'd give you in : but where are we ?
I see : 'twas in those days that Alfarabi lived ;
A man renowned in the newspapers :
He wrote in two reviews ; raw pork at night
He ate, and opium ; kept a bear at college :
A most extraordinary man was he.
But he was one not satisfied with man,
As man has made himself : he thought this life
Was something deeper than a jest, and sought
Into its roots : himself was his best science.
He touched the springs, the unheeded hieroglyphics
Deciphered ; like an antiquary sage
Within an house of office, which he takes
For druid temple old, here he picked up
A tattered thought, and turned it o'er and o'er
'Till it was spelled ; the names of all the tenants,
Pencilled upon the wall, he would unite ;
Until he found the secret and the spell
Of life. 'Twas not by Logic, reader ;
Her and her crabbed sister, Metaphysics,
Left he to wash Thought's shirt, the shirt bemired
On that proverbial morning. By his own mind,
The lamp that never fails us, dared we trust it,
He read the mystery ; and it was one
To the dull sense of common man unknown,
Incomprehensible ; a miracle
Of magic, yet as true and obvious,
For thoughtful ones to hit on, as the sun.
He knew the soul would free itself in sleep
From her dull sister, bear itself away,
Freer than air : to guide it with his will,
To bear his mortal sight and memory,
On these excursions, was the power he found.

He found it, and he used it. For, one night,
By the internal vision he saw Sleep,
Just after dinner, tapping at the door
Of his next neighbour, the old alderman.
Sleep rode a donkey with a pair of wings,
And, having fastened its ethereal bridle
Unto the rails, walked in. Now, Alfarabi !
Leap, Alfarabi ! There ! the saddle's won
He kicks, he thwacks, he spurs—the donkey flies
On soared they, like the bright thought of an eye,
'Mid the infinity of elements
First through the azure meads of night and day,
Among the rushing of the million flames,
They passed the bearded dragon-star, unchained
From Hell, (of old its sun), flashing its way
Upon those wings, compact of mighty clouds
Bloodshot and black, or flaring devilish light,
Whose echo racks the shrieking universe,
Whose glimpse is tempest. O'er each silent star
Slept like a tomb that dark, marmoreal bird,
That spellbound ocean, Night—her breast o'erwrit
With golden seeracies. All these he passed,
One after one. as he, who stalks by night,
With the ghost's step, the shaggy murderer
Leaves passed the dreamy city's sickly lamps.
Then through the horrid twilight did they plunge,
The universe's suburbs ; dwelling dim
Of all that sin and suffer ; midnight shrieks
Upon the water, when no help is nigh ;
The blood-choaked curse of him who dies in bed
By torchlight, with a dagger in his heart ,
The parricidal and incestuous laugh ;
And the last cries of those whom devils hale
Quick into hell ; deepened the darkness.
And there were sounds of wings, broken and swift ;
Blows of wrenched poniards, muffled in thick flesh ;
Struggles and tramlings wild, splashes and falls,

And inarticulate yells from human breasts.
Nought was beheld : but Alfarabi's heart
Turned in his bosom, like a scorched leaf,
And his soul faded. When again he saw,
His steed had paused. It was within a space
Upon the very boundary and brim
Of the whole universe, the outer edge
Which seemed almost to end the infinite zone ;
A chasm in the almighty thoughts, forgotten
By the omnipotent ; a place apart,
Like some great, ruinous dream of broken worlds
Tumbling through heaven, or Tartarus' panting jaws
Open above the sun. Sky was there none,
Nor earth, nor water : but confusion strange ;
Mountainous ribs and adamantine limbs
Of bursten worlds, and brazen pinions vast
Of planets shipwrecked ; many a wrinkled sun
Ate to the core by worms, with lightnings crushed ;
And drossy bolts, melting like noonday snow.
Old towers of heaven were there, and fragments bright
Of the cerulean battlements, o'erthrown
When the gods struggled for the throne of light ;
And 'mid them all a living mystery,
A shapeless image, or a vision wrapt
In clouds, and guessed at by its fearful shade .
Most like a ghost of the eternal flame,
An indistinct and unembodied horror
Which prophecies have told of ; not wan Death,
Nor War the bacchanal of blood, nor Plague
The purple beast, but their great serpent-sire,
Destruction's patriarch (dread name to speak !),
The End of all, the Universe's Death.
At that dread, ghostly thing, the atmosphere
And light of this, the world's black charnel house,
Low bowed the Archimage, and thrice his life
Upraised its wing for passage ; but the spell
Prevailed, and to his purposed task he rose.

He called unto the dead, and the swart powers,
That wander unconfined beyond the sight
Or thought of mortals ; and, from the abyss
Of cavernous deep night, came forth the hands,
That dealt the mallet when this world of ours
Lay quivering on the anvil in its ore—
Hands of eternal stone, which would unmesh
And fray this starry company of orbs,
As a young infant, on a dewy morn,
Rends into nought the tear-hung gossamer.
—To work they went, magician, hands, and Co,
With tongs, and trowels, needles, scissors, paste,
Solder and glue, to make another world :
And, as a tinker, 'neath a highway hedge,
Turns, taps, and batters, rattles, bangs, and scrapes
A stew-pan ruinous—or as, again,
The sibylline dame Gurton, ere she lost
Th' immortal bodkin, staunch'd the gaping wound
In Hodge's small-clothes famed—so those great hands
Whisk'd round their monstrous loom, here stitching in
An island of green valleys fitting there
A mountain extra with a hook and eye,
Caulking the sea, hemming the continents,
And lacing all behind to keep it tight.
'Tis done, 'tis finished ; and between the thumb
Depends, and the forefinger, like a toy,
Button with pin impaled, in winter games
That dances on the board—and now it flies
Into the abyssal blueness, spinning and bright,
Just at old Saturn's tail. The necromancer
Puffed from his pipe a British climate round,
And stars and moon, and angels beamed upon it.
Just as it joined the midnight choir of worlds,
It chanced a bearded sage espied it's sweep,
And named it GEORGIUM SIDUS.

THE ROMANCE OF THE LILY

EVER love the lily pale,
The flower of ladies' breasts ;
For there is passion on its cheek,
Its leaves a timorous sorrow speak,
And its perfume sighs a gentle tale
To its own young buds, and the wooing gale,
And the piteous dew that near it rests.
It is no earthly common flower
For man to pull, and maidens wear
On the wreathed midnight of their hair.
Deep affection is its dower ;
For Venus kissed it as it sprung,
And gave it one immortal tear.
When the forgotten goddess hung,
Woe-bowed o'er Adon's daisied bier ;
Its petals, brimmed with cool sweet air,
Are chaste as the words of a virgin's prayer ;
And it lives alight in the greenwood shade,
Like a love-thought, chequered o'er with fear,
In the memory of that self-same maid.

I ever have loved the lily pale,
For the sake of one whom heaven has ta'en
From the prison of man, the palace of pain.
In autumn, Mary, thou didst die ,
(Die ! no, thou didst not—but some other way
Wentest to bliss ; she could not die like men ;
Immortal into immortality
She went ; our sorrows know she went) ; and then
We laid her in a grassy bed
(The mortal her) to live for ever,
And there was nought above her head,
No flower to bend, no leaf to quiver.
At length, in spring, her beauty dear,
Awakened by my well-known tear,

And at its thrill returning,
Or her love and anguish burning,
 Wrought spells within the earth ;
 For a human bloom, a baby flower,
Uprose in talismanic birth ;
Where foliage was forbid to wave,
Engendered by no seed or shower,
A lily grew on Mary's grave

Last eve I lay by that blossom fair
 Alone I lay to think and weep ;
An awe was on the fading hour .
And 'midst the sweetness of the flower
There played a star of plumage rare,
A bird from off the ebon trees,
 That grow o'er midnight's rocky steep ,
One of those whose glorious eyes,
 In myriads sown, the restless sees,
And thinks what lustrous dew there lies
Upon the violets of the skies .
 And to itself unnumbered ditties
 Sang that angel nightingale
Secrets of the heavenly cities ,
 And many a strange and fearful word,
 Which in her arbour she had heard,
 When the court of seraphs sat .
 To seal some ghost's eternal fate ;
And the wind, beneath whose current deep
My soul was pillowed in her sleep,
 Thus breathed the mystic warbler's tale.

KING BALTHASAR has a tower of gold,
 And rubies pave his hall ;
A magic sun of diamond blazes
 Above his palace wall ;
And beaming spheres play round in mazes,
With locks of incense o'er them rolled.

Young Balthasar is the Libyan king,
The lord of wizard sages ;

He hath read the sun, he hath read the moon,
Heaven's thoughts are on their pages ;

He knows the meaning of night and noon,

And the spell on morning's wing :

The ocean he hath studied well,

Its maddest waves he hath subdued

Beneath an icy yoke.

And lashed them till they howled, and spoke

The mysteries of the Titan brood,

And all their god forbade them tell.

He hath beheld the storm,

When the phantom of its form

Leans out of heaven to trace,

Upon the earth and sea,

And air's cerulean face,

In earthquake, thunder, war, and fire,

And pestilence, and madness dire,

That mighty woe, futurity.

From the roof of his tower he talks to Jove,
As the god enthroned sits above :

Night roosts upon his turret's height,

And the sun is the clasp of its girdle of light ;

And the stars upon his terrace dwell .

But the roots of that tower are snakes in hell.

Balthasar's soul is a curse and a sin,

And nothing is human that dwells within,

But a tender, beauteous love,

That grows upon his haunted heart,

Like a scented bloom on a madhouse-wall ;

For, amid the wrath and roar of all,

It gathers life with blessed art,

And calmly blossoms on above.

Bright Sabra, when thy thoughts are seen

Moving within those azure eyes,

Like spirits in a star at e'en ;
And when that little dimple flies,
As air upon a rosy bush,
To hide behind thy fluttering blush ;
When kisses those rich lips uncloze,
And love's own music from them flows ;
A god might love—a demon does
—'Tis night upon the sprinkled sky.
And on their couch of roses
The king and lady lie
While the tremulous lid of each discloses
A narrow streak of the living eye ;
As when a beetle, afloat in the sun,
On a rocking leaf, has just begun
To sever the clasp of his outer wing,
So lightly, that you scarce can see
His little, lace pinions' delicate fold,
And a line of his body of breathing gold,
Girt with many a panting ring,
Before it quivers, and shuts again,
Like a smothered regret in the breast of men,
Or a sigh on the lips of chastity.

One bright hand, dawning through her hair,
Bids it be black, itself as fair
As the cold moon's palest daughter,
The last dim star, with doubtful ray
Snow-like melting into day,
Echoed to the eye on water ;
Round his neck and on his breast
The other curls, and bends its bell
Petalled inward as it fell,
Like a tented flower at rest.
She dreams of him, for rayed joys hover
In dimples round her timorous lip,
And she turns to clasp her sleeping lover,
Kissing the lid of his tender eye,

And brushing off the dew's that lie
Upon its lash's tip ;
And now she stirs no more,
But the thoughts of her breast are still,
As a song of a frozen rill
Which winter spreads his dark roof o'er.
In the still and moony hour
Of that calm entwining sleep,
From the utmost tombs of earth
The vision-land of death and birth,
Came a black, malignant power
A spectre of the desert deep .
And it is Plague the spotted fiend, the drunkard of
the tomb ,
Upon her mellowed temples the thunderbolts of
doom,
And blight-buds of hell's red fire, like gory wounds
in bloom,
Are twisted for a wreath ,
And there's a chalice in her hand, whence bloody
flashes gleam,
While struggling snakes with arrowy tongues twist
o'er it for a steam.
And its liquor is of Phlegethon and Ætna's wrath-
ful stream,
And icy deers of death

Like a rapid dream she came,
And vanished like the flame
Of a burning ship at sea,
But to his shrinking lips she pressed
The cup of boiling misery
And he quaffed it in his tortured rest,
And woke in the pangs of lunacy
As a buried soul awaking
From the cycle of its sleep,
Panic-struck and sad doth he

Beneath its mind's dim canopy,
And marks the stars of memory breaking
From 'neath oblivion's ebbing deep,
While clouds of doubt bewilder the true sky—
So in the hieroglyphic portal
Of his dreams sate Balthasar,
Awake amidst his slumbering senses,
And felt as feels man's ghost immortal,
Whom the corpse's earthen tences
From his vast existence bar.
The pestilence was in his breast,
And boiled and bubbled o'er his brain ;
His thoughtless eyes in their unrest
Would have burst their circling chain,
Scattering their fiery venom wide,
But for the soft, endearing rain,
With which the trembler at his side
Fed those gushing orbs of white,
As evening feeds the waves, with looks of quiet light.
The tear upon his cheek's fierce flush ;
The cool breath on his brow ,
And the healthy presage of a blush,
Sketched in faint tints behind his skin ;
And the hush of setting thoughts within,
Sabra hath given, and she will need them now.
For, as the echo of a grove
Keeps its dim shadow 'neath some song of love,
And gives her life away to it in sound,
Soft spreading her wild harmony,
Like a tress of smoking censery,
Or a ring of water round—
So all the flowery wealth
Of her happiness and health
Untwined from Sabra's strength, and grew
Into the blasted stem of Balthasar's pale life,
And his is the beauty and bliss that flew
On the wings of her love from his sinking wife.

The fading wanness of despair
Was the one colour of her cheek,
And tears upon her bosom fair
Wrote the woe she dared not speak ;
But life was in her. Yes : it played
In tremulous and fitful grace,
Like a flame's reflected breath
Shivering in the throes of death
Against the monumental face
Of some sad, voiceless marble maid.
And what is a woman to Balthasar,
Whom love has weakened, bowed, and broken ?
Upon his forehead's darksome war,
His lip's curled meaning, yet unspoken
The lowering of his wrinkled brow,
'Tis graved—he spurns, he loaths her now.

Along the sea, at night's black noon,
Alone the king and lady float,
With music in a snowy boat,
That glides in light, an ocean-moon ;
From billow to billow it dances,
And the spray around it glances,
And the mimic rocks and caves,
Beneath the mountains of the waves,
Reflect a joyous song
As the merry bark is borne along ;
And now it stays its eager sail
Within a dark sepulchral vale,
Amid the living Alps of Ocean,
'Round which the crags in tumult rise
And make a fragment of the skies ;
Beneath whose precipice's motion
The folded dragons of the deep
Lie with lidless eyes asleep :
It pauses ; and—Is that a shriek
That agonizes the still air,

And makes the dead day move and speak
From beneath its midnight pall—
Or the ruined billow's fall ?

The boat is soaring lighter there,
The voice of woman sounds no more.
That night the water-crescent bore
Dark Balthasar alone unto the living shore.

Tears, tears for Sabra ; who will weep ?
O blossoms, ye have dew,
And grief-dissembling storms might strew
Thick-dropping woe upon her sleep.
False sea, why dost thou look like sorrow,
Why is thy cold heart of water ?
Or rather why are tears of thee
Compassionless, bad sea ?

For not a drop does thy stern spirit borrow,
To mourn o'er beauty's fairest daughter.
Heaven, blue heaven, thou art not kind,
Or else the sun is not thine eye,
For thou should'st be with weeping blind,
Not thus forgetful bright and dry.
O that I were a plume of snow
To melt away and die
In a long chain of bubbling harmony !

My tribute shall be sweet tho' small ;
A cup of the vale-lily bloom
Filled with white and liquid woe—
Give it to her ocean-pall :
With such deluge-seeds I'll sow
Her mighty, elemental tomb,
Until the lamentations grow
Into a foaming crop of populus overflow.

Hither, like a bird of prey,
Whom red anticipations feed,
Flaming along the fearful day
Revenge's thirsty hour doth fly.

Heaven has said a fearful word
(Which hell's eternal labyrinths heard,
And the wave of time
Shall answer to the depths sublime,
Reflecting it in deed) ;

' Balthasar the king must die ' .
Must die ; for all his power is fled,
His spells dissolved, his spirits gone,
And magic cannot ease the bed
Where lies the necromant alone.

What thought is gnawing in his heart,
What struggles madly in his brain ?

See, the force, the fiery pain
Of silence makes his eyeballs start
O ease thy bosom, dare to tell—
But grey-haired pity speaks in vain ;
That bitter shriek, that hopeless yell,
Has given the secret safe to hell.

Like a ruffled nightingale,
Balanced upon dewy wings,
Through the palace weeps the tale,
Leaving tears, where'er she sings .
And, around the icy dead,
Maids are winding

• Kingly robes of mocking lead,
And with leafy garlands binding
The unresisting, careless head
Gems are flashing, garments wave
' Round the bridegroom of the grave
Hark ! A shout of wild surprise,
A burst of terrible amaze !
The lids are moving up his eyes,
They open, kindle, beam, and gaze.
Grave, thy bars are broken,
Quenched the flames of pain,
Falsely fate hath spoken,
The dead is born again.

For thou art weak, and tearful, and dost shiver
Wintrily sad ; and thy life's healthy river,
With which thy body once was overflown,
Is dried and sunken to its banks of bone.
He carved it not ; nor was the chisel's play,
That dashed the earthen hindrances away,
Driven and diverted by his muscle's sway.
The winged tool, as digging out a spell,
Followed a magnet wheresoe'er it fell,
That sucked and led it right : and for the rest,
The living form, with which the stone he blest,
Was the loved image stepping from his breast.
And therefore loves he it, and therefore stays
About the she-rock's feet, from hour to hour
Anchored to her by his own heart the power
Of the isle's Venus therefore thus he prays
' Goddess, that made me, save thy son, and save
The man, that made thee goddess from the grave.
Thou know'st it not ; it is a fearful coop
Dark, cold, and horrible—a blinded loop
In Pluto's madhouse' green and wormy wall.
O save me from't ! Let me not die, like all ;
For I am but like one : not yet, not yet,
At least not yet ; and why ? My eyes are wet
With the thick dregs of immature despair,
With bitter blood out of my empty heart.
I breathe not aught but my own sighs for air,
And my life's strongest is a dying start
No sour grief there is to me unwed ;
I could not be more lifeless being dead.
Then let me die. Ha ! did she pity me ?
Oh ! she can never love. Did you not see,
How still she bears the music of my moan !
Her heart ? Ah ! touch it. Fool ! I love the stone.
Inspire her, gods ! oft ye have wasted life
On the deformed, the hideous, and the vile :
Oh ! grant it my sweet rock, my only wife.

Upon the pavement ghastly is he lying,
Cold with the last and stoniest embrace :
Elysium's light illumines all his face ;
His eyes have a wild, starry grace
Of heaven, into whose depth of depths he's dying,
—A sound, with which the air doth shake,
Extinguishing the window of moonlight !
A pang of music dropping round delight,
As if sweet music's homiest heart did break !
Such a flash, and such a sound, the world
Is stung by, as if something was unfurled
That held great bliss within its inmost curled.
Roof after roof, the palace rends asunder ;
And then—O sight of joy and placid wonder !
He lies, beside a fountain, on the knee
Of the sweet woman-statue, quietly
Weeping the tears of his felicity.

LINES

WRITTEN IN A BLANK LEAF OF THE ' PROMETHEUS
UNBOUND '

WRITE it in gold—A spirit of the sun,
An intellect ablaze with heavenly thoughts,
A soul with all the dews of pathos shining,
Odorous with love, and sweet to silent woe
With the dark glories of concentrate song,
Was sphered in mortal earth Angelic sounds
Alive with panting thoughts sunned the dim world.
The bright creations of an human heart
Wrought magic in the bosoms of mankind.
A flooding summer burst on poetry ;
Of which the crowing sun, the night of beauty,
The dancing showers, the birds, whose anthems wild

Troubles my senses ; therefore, Greek, shut up
Your dazzling pages ; covered be the cup
Which Homer has beneath his mantle old,
Steamy with boiling life : your petals fold
You fat, square blossoms of the yet young tree
Of Britain-grafted, flourishing Germany :
Hush ! Latin, to your grave . and, with the chime,
My pen shall turn the minutes into rhyme,
And, like the dial, blacken them. There sits,
Or stands, or lounges, or perhaps on bits
Of this rag's daughter, paper, exorcises,
With strange black marks and inky wild devices,
The witch of words, the echo of great verse,
About the chasms of the universe,
Ringing and bounding immortality.
Give him thy bosom, dark Melpomene,
And let him of thy goblet and thine eye
Exhaust the swimming, deep insanity.
He hath the soul, O let it then be fed,
Sea after sea, with that which is not read,
Nor wrung by reasoning from a resolute head,
But comes like lightning on a hill-top steeple ;
Heaven's spillings on the lofty laurelled people.
Verse to thee, light to thee, wings upraise thee long
In the unvacillating soar of song,
Thou star-seed of a man ! But do not dare
To tempt thy Apollonian god too far,
Clogging and smoking thy young snake, Renown,
In the strait, stony shadows of the town,
Lest he grow weak, and pine, and never be
What he was born, twin to Eternity.
So come, shake London from thy skirts away :
So come, forget not it is England's May,
For Oxford, ho ! by moonlight or by sun ;
Our horses are not hours, but rather run
Foot by foot faster than the second-sand,
While the old sunteam, like a plough, doth stand

Stuck in thick heaven. Here thou at morn shalt see
Spring's dryad-wakening whisper call the tree,
And move it to green answers ; and beneath,
Each side the river which the fishes breathe,
Daisies and grass, whose tops were never stirred,
Or dews made tremulous, but by foot of bird.
And you shall mark in spring's heaven-tapestried room
Yesterday's knoppe, burst by its wild perfume,
Like woman's childhood, to this morning's bloom ;
And here a primrose pale beneath a tree,
And here a cowslip longing for its bee,
And violets and lilies every one
Grazing in the great pasture of the sun,
Beam after beam, visibly as the grass
Is swallowed by the lazy cows that pass.
Come look, come walk, and there shall suddenly
Seize you a rapture and a phantasy ;
High over mountain sweeping, fast and high
Through all the intricacies of the sky,
As fast and far a shipwrecked hoard of gold
Dives ocean cutting every billow's fold
These are the honey-minutes of the year
Which make man god, and make a god—Shakespeare.
Come, gathier them with me. If not, then go,
And with thee all the ghosts of Jonson's toe,
The fighting Tartars and the Carthaginians :
And may your lady-muse's stiff-winged pinions
Be naked and impossible to fly,
Like a fat goose pen-plucked for poetry
A curse upon thy cream to make it sour :
A curse upon thy teapot every hour ;
Spirits of ice possess it ' and thy tea,
Changed at its contact, hay and straw leaves be '
A cold and nipping ague on thine urn !
And an invisible canker eat and burn
The mathematic picture, near your fire,
Of the grave, compass-handed, quiet sire !

No more. Be these the visions of your sorrow
 When you have read this doggrel through to-morrow,
 And then refuse to let our Oxford borrow
 You of the smoky-faced, Augustan town,
 And unpersuaded drop the paper down.

• ANOTHER LETTER TO THE SAME

FROM GÖTTINGEN ; MARCH, 1826

To-DAY a truant from the odd, old bones
 And rinds of flesh, which, as tamed rocks and stones
 Piled cavernously make his body's dwelling,
 Have housed man's soul : there, where time's billows
 swelling
 Roll a deep, ghostly, and invisible sea
 Of melted worlds antediluvially,
 Upon the sand of ever-crumbling hours,
 God-founded, stands the castle, all its towers
 With veiny tendrils ivied : this bright day
 I leave its chambers, and with oars away
 Seek some enchanted island, where to play.
 And what do you that in the enchantment dwell,
 And should be raving ever ? a wild swell
 Of passionate life rolling about the world,
 Now sun-sucked to the clouds, dashed on the curled
 Leaf-hidden daisies, an incarnate storm
 Letting the sun through on the meadows yellow,
 Or anything except that earthy fellow.
 That wise dog's brother, man. O shame to tell !
 Make tea in Circe's cup, boil the cool well,
 The well Pierian, which no bird dare sip
 But nightingales. There let kettles dip
 Who write their simpering sonnets to its song,
 And walk on Sundays in Parnassus' park :

Take thy example from the sunny lark,
Throw off the mantle which conceals the soul,
The many citted world, and seek thy goal
Straight as a star-beam falls. Creep not nor climb,
As they who place their topmost of sublime
On some peak of this planet, pitifully.
Dart eaglewise with open wings, and fly
Until you meet the gods. Thus counsel I
The men who can but tremble to be great :
Cursed be the fool who tinct to hesitate,
And to regret this, lest most bitterly !
And thus I write, and I dare write, to thee,
Not worshipping as those are wont to do,
Who feed and fear some asinine review.
Let Jaggernaut roll on ; but we, whose sires
Blooded his wheels and praved around his fires,
Laugh at the leaden ass in the god's skin.
Example follows precept. I have been
Giving some negro minutes of the night,
Freed from the slavery of my ruling spright
And to the grim to new story
In whose satiric pathos we will glory
In it despair has married wildest mirth
And, to their wedding-banquet, all the earth
Is bade to bring its enmities and loves,
Triumphs and horrors : you shall see the doves
Billing with quiet joy, and all the while
Their nest's the skull of some old king of Nile.
But he who fills the cups, and makes the jest,
Pipes to the dancers, is the fool o' th' feast,
Who's he ? I've dug him up and decked him trim,
And made a mock, a fool, a slave of him,
Who was the planet's tyrant, dotard Death ;
Man's hate and dread. Not, with a stoical breath,
To meet him, like Augustus, standing up ;
Nor with grave saws to season the cold cup,
Like the philosopher, nor yet to hail

His coming with a verse or jesting tale,
 As Adrian did and More : but of his night,
 His moony ghostliness, and silent might
 To rob him, to uncypress him in the light,
 To unmask all his secrets ; make him play
 Momus o'er wine by torchlight, is the way
 To conquer him, and kill ; and from the day,
 Spurn'd, hiss'd, and hooted, send him back again,
 An unmask'd braggart to his bankrupt den.
 For death is more ' a jest ' than life. You see
 Contempt grows quick from familiarity.
 I owe this wisdom to Anatomy.
 Your muse is younger in her soul than mine :
 O feed her still on woman's smiles and wine,
 And give the world a tender song once more ;
 For all the good can love and can adore
 What's human fair, and gentle. Few, I know,
 Can bear to sit at my board, when I show
 The wretchedness and folly of man's all,
 And laugh myself right heartily. Your call
 Is higher and more human : I will do
 Unsociably my part, and still be true
 To my own soul ; but e'er admire you,
 And own that you have nature's kindest trust,
 Her weak and dear to nourish, that I must.
 Then fare, as you deserve it, well, and live
 In the calm feelings you to others give.

THE BODING DREAMS

I

In lover's ear a wild voice cried :
 ' Sleeper, awake and rise ! '
 A pale form stood at his bedside,
 With heavy tears in her sad eyes,

'A beckoning hand, a moaning sound,
A new-dug grave in weedy ground
For her who sleeps in dreams of thee.
Awake ! Let not the murder be !'
Unheard the faithful dream did pray,
'And sadly sighed itself away.

'Sleep on', sung Sleep, 'to-morrow
'Tis time to know thy sorrow'.

'Sleep on', sung Death, 'to-morrow
From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow'.

Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
The tedious dream is gone ;
The bell tolls one.

II

Another hour, another dream :

'Awake ! awake !' it wailed,
'Arise, ere with the moon's last beam
Her dearest life hath paled'.

A hidden light, a muffled tread,
A daggered hand beside the bed
Of her who sleeps in dreams of thee.
Thou wak'st not : let the murder be.
In vain the faithful dream did pray,
And sadly sighed itself away.

'Sleep on', sung Sleep, 'to-morrow
'Tis time to know thy sorrow'.

'Sleep on', sung Death, 'to-morrow
From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow'.

Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
The tedious dream is gone ;
Soon comes the sun.

III

Another hour, another dream :

A red wound on a snowy breast,

A rude hand stifling the last scream,
 On rosy lips a death-kiss pressed.
 Blood on the sheets, blood on the floor,
 The murderer stealing through the door.
 'Now', said the voice, with comfort deep,
 'She sleeps indeed, and thou may'st sleep'.
 The scornful dream then turned away
 To the first, weeping cloud of day.
 'Sleep on', sung Sleep, 'to-morrow
 'Tis time to know thy sorrow.
 'Sleep on,' sung Death, 'to-morrow
 From me thy sleep thou'lt borrow'.
 Sleep on, lover, sleep on,
 The tedious dream is gone ;
 The murder's done.

LOVE'S LAST MESSAGES

MERRY, merry little stream,
 Tell me, hast thou seen my dear ?
 I left him with an azure dream,
 Calmly sleeping on his bier—
 But he has fled !

'I passed him in his churchyard bed—
 A yew is sighing o'er his head,
 And grass-roots mingle with his hair'.
 What doth he there ?
 O cruel ! can he lie alone ?
 Or in the arms of one more dear ?
 Or hides he in that bower of stone,
 To cause and kiss away my fear ?

'He doth not speak, he doth not moan,
 Blind, motionless, he lies alone ;
 But, ere the grave snake fleshed his sting.

This one warm tear he bade me bring
And lay it at thy feet
Among the daisies sweet '.

Moonlight whisperer, summer air,
Songster of the groves above,
Tell the maiden rose I wear,
Whether thou hast seen my love.
' This night in heaven I saw him lie,
Discontented with his bliss ,
And on my hps he left this kiss,
For thee to taste and then to die '.

THE GHOSTS' MOONSHINE

I

It is midnight, my wedded ;
Let us lie under
The tempest bright undreaded,
In the warm thunder .
(Tremble and weep not ' What can you fear ?)
My heart's best wish is thine,
That thou wert white, and bedded
On the softest bier,
In the ghosts' moonshine.
Is that the wind ? No, no ;
Only two devils, that blow
Through the murderer's ribs to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

2

II

Who is there, she said afraid, yet
Stirring and awaking
The poor old dead ? His spade, it
Is only making—

(Tremble and weep not ! What do you crave ?)

Where yonder grasses twine,
A pleasant bed, my maid, that
Children call a grave.

In the cold moonshine.
Is that the wind ? No, no ;
Only two devils, that blow
Through the murderer's ribs to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

III

What dost thou strain above her
Lovely throat's whiteness ?
A silken chain, to cover
Her bosom's brightness ?

(Tremble and weep not : what do you fear ?)

—My blood is spilt like wine,
Thou hast strangled and slain me, lover,
Thou hast stabbed me, dear,
In the ghosts' moonshine.
Is that the wind ? No, no ;
Only her goblin doth blow
Through the murderer's ribs to and fro,
In its own moonshine.

FROM THE GERMAN

I

'Come with me, thou gentle maid,
The stars are strong, and make a shade
Of yew across your mother's tomb ;
Leave your chamber's vine-leaved gloom,
Leave your harp-strings, loved one,
'Tis our hour' ; the robbersaid
'Yonder comes the goblins' sun,

For, when men are still in bed,
Day begins with the old dead.
Leave your flowers so dewed with weeping,
And our feverish baby sleeping ;
Come to me, thou gentle maid,
'Tis our hour '. The robber said.

II

To the wood, whose shade is night,
Went they in the owls' moonlight.
As they passed, the common wild
Like a murderous jester smiled,
Dimpled twice with nettly graves.
You may mark her garment white,
In the night-wind how it waves :
The night-wind to the churchyard flew,
And whispered underneath the yew ;
' Mother churchyard, in my breath,
I've a lady's sigh of death '.
— ' Sleep thou there, thou robber's wife ',
Said he, clasping his wet knife.

THE PHANTOM-WOOER

I

A GHOST, that loved a lady fair,
Ever in the starry air
Of midnight at her pillow stood ;
And, with a sweetness skies above
The luring words of human love,
Her soul the phantom wooed.
Sweet and sweet is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat,
In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing ' die, oh ! die '.

II

Young soul put off your flesh, and come
With me into the quiet tomb,

Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet ;
The earth will swing us, as she goes,
Beneath our coverlid of snows,

And the warm leaden sheet.
Dear and dear is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat,
In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing ' die, oh ! die '.

A DIRGE

WRITTEN FOR A DRAMA

To-DAY is a thought, a fear is to-morrow,
And yesterday is our sin and our sorrow ;
And life is a death,

Where the body's the tomb,
And the pale sweet breath

Is buried alive in its hideous gloom
Then waste no tear,

For we are the dead ; the living are here,
In the stealing earth, and the heavy bier.

Death lives but an instant and is but a sigh,
And his son is unnamed immortality,

Whose being is thine. Dear ghost, so to die
Is to live—and life is a worthless he.

Then we weep for ourselves, and wish thee good-bye.

ANOTHER DIRGE

FOR A YOUNG MAIDEN

HUSHED be sighing, near the string,
O'er whose tremors deep we sing
The youngest Death, who hath no fears,
Blood, nor pang, nor any tears
Hushed be sighing !
Fair and young as Venus' child,
Only paler, and most mild ;
End of all that's dear and young,
Thee we mean, soft Drop of roses ;
Hush of birds that sweetest sung,
That beginn'st when music closes ;
The maiden's Dying !

BRIDAL SERENADE

MAIDEN, thou sittest alone above,
Crowned with flowers, and like a sprite
Starrily clothed in a garment white :
Thou art the only maiden I love,
And a soul of fondness to thee I bring,
Thy glorious beauty homaging,
But ah ! thou wearest a golden ring.
Maiden, thou'st broken no vow to me,
But undone me alone with gentleness,
Wasting upon me glances that bless ;
And knew'st that I never was born for thee.
No hope, no joy ; yet never more
My heart shall murmur ; now 'tis o'er,
I'll bless thee dying at thy door.

DIRGE

To her couch of evening rest
 'Neath the sun's divinest west,
 Bear we, in the silent car,
 This consumed incense star,
 This dear maid whose life is shed,
 And whose sweets are sweetly dead.

DIRGE AND HYMENEAL

SUPPOSED TO BE SUNG AS THE FUNERAL AND WEDDING
 PROCESSIONS CROSS EACH OTHER AT THE CHURCH-
 DOOR

Dirge

Woe ! woe ! this is death's hour
 Of spring ; behold his flower !
 Fair babe of life, to whom
 Death, and the dreamy tomb,
 Was nothing yesterday,
 And now is all !
 The maiden, from her play
 Beside her lover gay,
 The churchyard voices call,
 Tolling so slow,
 Woe ! woe !

Hymeneal

Joy ! joy ! it is love's day ;
 Strew the young conqueror's way
 With summer's glories young,
 O'er which the birds have sung,
 Bright weeds from fairy rings ;
 Here, there, away !

Joy, joy, the tree-bird sings,
Joy, joy, a hundred springs'
Melodies ever say,
Maiden and boy,
Joy ! joy !

Dirge

She cut the roses down,
And wreathed her bridal crown.
Death, playful, called her ' blossom ',¹
And tore her from life's bosom.
Fair maiden, or fair ghost—
Which is thy name ?—
Come to the spectral host ;
They pity thee the most,
And, to the cold world's shame,
Soft cry they, low,
Woe ! woe !

DIAL-THOUGHTS

I

I THINK of thee at daybreak still,
And then thou art my playmate small,
Beside our straw-roofed village rill
Gathering cowslips tall,
And chasing oft the butterfly,
Which flutters past like treacherous life.
You smile at me and at you I,
A husband boy and baby wife.

II

I think of thee at noon again,
And thy meridian beauty high
Falls on my bosom, like young rain
Out of a summer sky :

¹ "Culled her blossom,"—GOSSE.

And I reflect it in the tear,
 Which 'neath thy picture drops forlorn,
 And then my love is bright and clear,
 And manlier than it was at morn.

III

I think of thee by evening's star,
 And softly melancholy, slow,
 An eye doth glisten from afar,
 All full of lovely woe.
 The air then sighingly doth part,
 And, or from Death the cold, or Love,
 I hear the passing of a dart,
 But hope once more, and look above.

IV

I think of thee at black midnight,
 And woe and agony it is
 To see thy cheek so deadly white,
 To hear thy grave-worm hiss.
 But looking on thy lips is cheer,
 They closed in love, pronouncing love ;
 And then I tremble, not for fear,
 But in thy breath from heaven above.

DREAM-PEDLARY

I

If there were dreams to sell,
 What would you buy ?
 Some cost a passing bell ;
 Some a light sigh,
 That shakes from Life's fresh crown
 Only a rose-leaf down.

If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rung the bell,
What would you buy ?

II

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
I am would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

III

But there were dreams to sell
Ill didst thou buy ;
Life is a dream, they tell,
Waking, to die.
Dreaming a dream to prize,
Is wishing ghosts to rise ;
And, if I had the spell
To call the buried well,
Which one would I ?

IV

If there are ghosts to raise,
What shall I call,
Out of hell's murky haze,
Heaven's blue pall ?
Raise my loved long-lost boy
To lead me to his joy.
There are no ghosts to raise ;
Out of death lead no ways ;
Vain is the call.

V

Know'st thou not ghosts to sue ?
No love thou hast.
Else lie, as I will do,
And breathe thy last.
So out of Life's fresh crown
Fall like a rose-leaf down.
Thus are the ghosts to woo ;
Thus are all dreams made true,
Ever to last !

BALLAD OF HUMAN LIFE

I

WHEN we were girl and boy together,
We tossed about the flowers
And wreathed the blushing hours
Into a posy green and sweet.
I sought the youngest, best,
And never was at rest
Till I had laid them at thy fairy feet.
But the days of childhood they were fleet,
And the blooming sweet-briar breathed weather,
When we were boy and girl together.

II

Then we were lad and lass together,
And sought the kiss of night
Before we felt aright,
Sitting and singing soft and sweet.
The dearest thought of heart
With thee 'twas joy to part,
And the greater half was thine, as meet.
Still my eyelid's dewy, my veins they beat
At the starry summer-evening weather,
When we were lad and lass together.

III

And we are man and wife together,
Although thy breast, once bold
With song, be closed and cold
Beneath flowers' roots and birds' light feet.
Yet sit I by thy tomb,
And dissipate the gloom
With songs of loving faith and sorrow sweet.
And fate and darkling grave kind dreams do cheat,
That while fair life young hope, despair and death are,
We're boy and girl, and lass and lad, and man and
wife together.

SONG, ON THE WATER

I

WILD with passion, sorrow-beladen,
Bend the thought of thy stormy soul
On its home, on its heaven, the loved maiden ;
And peace shall come at her eyes' control.
Even so night's starry rest possesses
With its gentle spirit these tamed waters,
And bids the wave, with weedy tresses
Embower the ocean's pavement stilly
Where the sea-girls lie, the mermaid-daughters,
Whose eyes, not born to weep,
More palely-lidded sleep,
Than in our fields the lily ;
And sighing in their rest
More sweet than is its breath ;
And quiet as its death
Upon a lady's breast.

II

Heart high-beating, triumph-bewreathed,
 Search the record of loves gone by,
 And borrow the blessings by them bequeathed
 To deal from out of thy victory's sky.
 Even so, throughout the midnight deep,
 The silent moon doth seek the bosoms
 Of those dear mermaid-girls asleep,
 To feed its dying rays anew,
 Like to the bee on earthly blossoms,
 Upon their silvery whiteness,
 And on the rainbow brightness
 Of their eyelashes' dew,
 And kisseth their limbs o'er :
 Her lips where they do quaff
 Strike starry tremors off,
 As from the waves our oar.

LOVE-IN-IDLENESS

I

' SHALL I be your first love, lady, shall I be your first ?
 Oh ! then I'll fall before you, down on my velvet knee,
 And deeply bend my rosy head and press it upon thee,
 And swear that there is nothing more, for which my
 heart doth thirst,
 But a downy kiss, and pink,
 Between your lips' soft chink.'

II

' Yes, you shall be my first love, boy, and you shall
 be my first,
 And I will raise you up again unto my bosom's fold ;
 And, when you kisses many one on lip and cheek
 have told,

I'll let you loose upon the grass, to leave me if you durst ;
And so we'll toy away
The night besides the day '.

III

' But let me be your second love, but let me be your
second,
For then I'll tap so gently, dear, upon your window
pane,
And creep between the curtains in, where never man
has lain,
And never leave thy gentle side till the morning star
hath beckoned,
Held in the silken lace
Of thy young arms' embrace '.

IV

' Well thou shalt be my second love, yes, gentle boy,
my second,
And I will wait at eve for thee all lonely in my bower,
And yield unto thy kisses, like a bud to April's
shower,
From moonset till the tower-clock the hour of dawn
hath reckoned,
And lock thee with my arms
All silent up in charms '.

V

' No, I will be thy third love, lady, aye I will be the
third,
And break upon thee, bathing, in woody place alone,
And catch thee to my saddle and ride o'er stream
and stone,
And press thee well, and kiss thee well, and never
speak a word,
'Till-thou hast yielded up
The first taste of love's cup '.

VI

' Then thou shalt not be my first love, boy, nor my
 second, nor my third ;
 If thou'rt the first, I'll laugh at thee and pierce thy
 flesh with thorns ;
 If the second, from my chamber pelt with jeering
 laugh and scorns ;
 And if thou darest be the third, I'll draw my dirk un-
 heard
 And cut thy heart in two,
 And then die, weeping you '.

THE REASON WHY

I

I LOVE thee and I love thee not,
 I love thee, yet I'd rather not,
 All of thee, yet I know not what.
 A flowery eye as tender,
 A swan-like neck as slender,
 And on it a brown little spot
 For tears to fall afraid on,
 And kisses to be paid on,
 Have other maidens too
 Then why love I, love, none but you ?
 If I could find the reason why,
 Methinks my love would quickly die.

II

Aye, knew I how to hate thee, maid,
 I'd hate thee for I knew not what,
 Excepting that I'd rather not
 Be thy friend or foeman ;
 For thou'rt the only woman,
 On whom to think my heart's afraid ;

For, if I would abhor thee,
The more must I long for thee.
What others force me to,
I turn me from ; why not from you ?
If I could find the reason why,
Methinks my love would quickly die.

III

Yet should'st thou cease my heart to move
To longings, that I'd rather not,
And tried I hate, I know not what
My heart would do for mourning ;
Love I—it bursts, love scorning.
O loveliest hate, most hateful love,
This combat and endeavour
Is what enslaves me ever.
I'll neither of the two,
Or hate or love the love of you.
And now I've found the reason why,
I know my love can never die.

THE TWO ARCHERS

I

At break of bright May morning,
When, triumphing o'er dark,
The sun's inspired lark,
All sprites and spectres scorning,
And laughing at all creatures' joys
Who could not hang, and dive, and poise
In their own web and flood of noise,
Dropped, out of his heart's treasure,
The sunbeam's path along,
Sparks and dews of song,
As if there were no pleasure
But to rise and sing and fly,
Winged and all soul, into the sky :

II

At break of this May morning,
A maiden young and coy
Saw a wild archer boy
Flying around and scorning,
Birdlike, a withered bowman's arts,
Who aimed, as he, at roses' hearts.
Each cried 'Come buy my darts,
They are with magic laden
To deify the blood;
An angel in the bud,
Half-closed, is a maiden,
Till, opened by such wound, she fly,
Winged and all soul into the sky'.

III

'You archers of May morning',
Said she, 'if I must choose,
Such joy is to peruse,
In the star-light adorning,
The urchin's eye, that my desire
Is for his darts, whose breath fans higher
The smitten roses like a fire'.
So Love,—'twas he—shot smiling
His shaft, then flew away;
Alas! that morn of May!
Love fled, there's no beguiling
Repentance, but by hopes to fly,
Winged and all soul, into the sky.

IV

So one December morning,
When the bold lark no more
Rebuked the ghosts so sore,
When dews were not adorning
Ought but that maiden's cheek, where wide

The blushes spread their leaves, to hide
The broken heart which such supplied ;
She sought the pair of May-day,
And to the old one saith, -
' Let thy dart, stedfast Death,
Cure a forsaken lady ;
Its point is but for those who'd fly,
Winged and all soul, into the sky'.

THE RUNAWAY

I

HAS no one seen my heart of you ?
My heart has run away ;
And, if you catch him, ladies, do
Return him me, I pray.
On earth he is no more, I hear,
Upon the land or sea ;
For the women found the rogue so queer,
They sent him back to me.
In heaven there is no purchaser
For such strange ends and odds,
Says a Jew, who goes to Jupiter
To buy and sell old gods.
So there's but one more place to search,
That's not genteel to tell,
Where demonesses go to church :
So Christians fair, farewell.

SONG ON THE WATER

I

As mad sexton's bell, tolling
For earth's loveliest daughter
Night's dumbness breaks rolling
Ghostily :
So our boat breaks the water
Witchingly.

II

As her look the dream troubles
Of her tearful-eyed lover,
So our sails in the bubbles
Ghostily
Are mirrored, and hover
Moonily.

ALPINE SPIRIT'S SONG

I

O'ER the snow, through the air, to the mountain,
With the antelope, with the eagle, ho '
With a bound, with a feathery row,
To the side of the icy fountain,
Where the gentians blue-belled blow.
Where the storm-sprite, the raindrops counting,
Cowers under the bright rainbow,
Like a burst of midnight fire,
Singing shoots my fleet desire,
Winged with the wing of love,
Earth below and stars above.

II

Let me rest on the snow, never pressed
But by chamois light and by eagle fleet,
Where the hearts of the antelope beat
'Neath the light of the moony cresset,
Where the wild cloud rests his feet,
And the scented airs caress it
From the alpine orchis sweet :
And about the Sandalp lone
Voices airy breathe a tone,
Charming, with the sense of love,
Earth below and stars above.

III

Through the night, like a dragon from Pilate
 Out of murky cave, let us cloudy sail
 Over lake, over bowery vale,
 As a chime of bells, at twilight
 In the downy evening gale,
 Passes swimming tremulously light ;
 Till we reach yon rocky pale
 Of the mountain crowning all,
 Slumber there by waterfall,
 Lonely like a spectre's love,
 Earth beneath, and stars above.

SONG

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF WALTHER VON DER
 VOGELWEIDE

I

UNDER the lime-tree, on the daisied ground,
 Two that I know of made their bed ;
 There you may see, heaped and scattered round,
 Grass and blossoms, broken and shed,
 All in a thicket down in the dale ;
 Tandaradei—
 Sweetly sang the nightingale.

II

Ere I set foot in the meadow, already
 Some one was waiting for somebody ;
 There was a meeting—O gracious Lady !
 There is no pleasure again for me.
 Thousands of kisses there he took—
 Tandaradei—
 See my lips, how red they look !

III

Leaf and blossom he had pulled and piled
 For a couch, a green one, soft and high ;
 And many a one hath gazed and smiled,
 Passing the bower and pressed grass by ;
 And the roses crushed hath seen—

Tandaradei—

Where I laid my head between.

IV

In this love passage, if any one had been there,
 How sad and shamed should I be !
 But what were we a-doing alone among the green there,
 No soul shall ever know except my love and me,
 And the little nightingale.—

Tandaradei—

She, I think, will tell no tale.

SONG OF THE STYGIAN NAIADES

PROSERPINE may pull her flowers,
 Wet with dew or wet with tears
 Red with anger, pale with fears,
 Is it any fault of ours,
 If Pluto be an amorous king,
 And comes home nightly, laden,
 Underneath his broad bat-wing.
 With a gentle, mortal maiden ?
 Is it so, Wind, is it so ?
 All that you and I do know
 Is, that we say fly and fix
 'Mongst the reeds and flowers of Styx,
 Yesterday,
 Where the Furies made their hay

For a bed of tiger cubs,
 A great fly of Beelzebub's,
 The bee of hearts, which mortals name
 Cupid, Love, and Fie for shame.

II

Proserpine may weep in rage,
 But, ere I and you have done
 Kissing, bathing in the sun,
 What I have in yonder cage.
 Bird or serpent wild or tame,
 She shall guess and ask in vain ;
 But, if Pluto does't again,
 It shall sing out loud his shame.
 What hast caught then ? What hast caught ?
 Nothing but a poet's thought,
 Which so light did fall and fix
 'Mongst the reeds and flowers of Styx,
 Yesterday,
 Where the Furies made their hay
 For a bed of tiger cubs,
 A great fly of Beelzebub's,
 The bee of hearts, which mortals name
 Cupid, Love, and Fie for shame.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

WHERE the hare-bells are ringing
 Their peal of sunny flowers,
 And a bird of merry soul
 Sings away the birthday hours
 Of the valley-lily low,
 Opening, dewily and slow,
 Petals, dear to young and fair
 For the prophecy they bear
 Of the coming roses—
 The free bold bird of merry soul

Amidst his leaves cannot control
His triumphant love of spring.

Thou bird of joyous soul,
Why can'st thou not control
Thy triumphant love of spring ?
I know that thou dost rally
Thy spirit proud to sing,
Because to-day is born
The lily of the valley.
Oh ! rather should'st thou mourn ;
For that flower so meek and low,
Born with its own death-bell,
Only cometh to foretell
Unpitying winter's doom,
Who in scorn doth lay it low
In the tomb.

Vain is all its prayer,
It may flatter, as it will,
The ungentle hours
With its ring of toying flowers ;
Unrelenting they must kill
With their scornful breath,
For the very petals fair,
Which the destined flower uncloses
In its innocence,
To plead for its defence,
By the prophecy they bear
Of the coming roses,
Sign the warrant for its death.

A LAMENT

In the twilight, silent smiled
All alone the daisy's eyelid,
Fringed with pink-tipped petals piled.

—In the morning 'twas no more ;
In its place a gout of gore.
Break of day was break of heart,
. Since, dear maiden, dead thou art.

DIRGE

LET dew the flowers fill ;
No need of fell despair,
Though to the grave you bear
One still of soul—but now too still,
One fair—but now too fair.
For beneath your feet, the mound,
And the waves, that play around,
Have meaning in their grassy, and their watery, smiles ;
And, with a thousand sunny wiles,
Each says, as he reproves,
Death's arrow oft is Love's.

EPITAPH

THE forms divinity, the heart's best grace,
Where are they ? Have they their immortal throne
Upon thy maiden's thought and peerless face,
Thou cold-eyed reader ? Yet, beneath this stone
Dust lies, weeds grow : and this is the remain
Of one best union of that deathless twain.

POETIC FRAGMENTS

THE TREE OF LIFE

THERE is a mighty, magic tree,
That holds the round earth and the sea
In its branches like a net :
Its immortal trunk is set
Broader than the tide of night
With its star-tipped billows bright :
Human thought doth on it grow,
Like the barren mistletoe
On an old oak's forehead-skin
Ever while the planets spin
Their blue existence, that great plant
Shall nor bud nor blossom want ;
Summer, winter, night and day,
It must still its harvest pay ,
Ever while the night grows up
Along the wall of the wide sky,
And the thunder-bee sweeps by,
On its brown, wet wing, to dry
Every day-star's crystal cup
Of its yellow summer : still
At the foot of heaven's hull,
With fruit and blossom flush and rife,
Stays that tree of Human Life.

Let us mark yon newest bloom
Heaving through the leafy gloom ;
Now a pinkish bud it grows
Scentless, bloomless ; slow uncloze
Its outer pages to the sun,

Opened, but not yet begun.
 Its first leaf is infancy,
 Pencilled pale and tenderly,
 Smooth its cheek and mild its eye :
 Now it swells, and curls its head—
 Little infancy is shed.
 Broader childhood is the next—

* * * * *

THE NEW-BORN STAR

THE world is born to-day !

What is the world ? Behold the wonder :

With a mighty thunder,

'Round the sun, it rolls this way ;

And its shadow falls afar

Over many a star,

And the interstellar vale,

Through which some aged, patient globe

(Whose gaunt sides no summers robe),

Like a prisoner through his grate,

Shivering in despair doth wait

For sunbeams broken, old, and pale.

Bounding, like its own fleet deer

Down a hill, behold the sphere !

Now a mountain, tall and wide,

Hanging weighty on its side

Pulls it down impetuously ;

Yet the little butterfly,

Whom the daisy's dew doth glut,

With his wings' small pages shut,

Was not stirred.

Now forests fall, like clouds that gather

O'er the plain's unruffled weather :

Burst great rocks, with thunder, out :
 Lakes, their plunged feet about,
 Round, and smooth, and heaving ever,
 An unawakened serpent-river
 Coiled and sleeping.

Silver changes now are creeping
 'Round the descending summit of the ball .
 Pastures break, and stedfast land
 Sinks, melting — mighty ocean is at hand
 Space for eternal waves ! Be strong and wide,
 Thou new-born star ! Reflecting all the sky,
 And its lone sun the island-starred tide
 Swells billowing by.

At last the dreadful sea is curled
 Behind the nations. Mark ye now
 The death-intending wrinkles of his brow ?
 He is the murderous Judas of the world ;

* * * * *

What valley green with stream and tree,
 The fairest sweetest place,

* * * * *

THRENODY

No sunny ray, no silver night,
 Here cruelly alight !
 Glare of noontide, star of e'en,
 Otherwhere descend !
 No violet-eyed green,
 With its daisies' yellow end,
 The dewy debt receive of any eye !
 It is a grave : and *she* doth lie
 'Neath roses' root,
 And the fawn's mossy foot,
 Under the skylark's grassy floor,
 Whose graceful life held every day—

As lilies, dew—as dews, the starry ray—
 More music, grace, delight than they.
 When stars are few let light be here,
 Of the softest, through the boughs
 Berry-laden, sad and few ;
 And the wings of one small bird,
 His form unseen, his voice unheard—

* * * *

LINES

WRITTEN AT GENEVA ; JULY, 1824

THE hour is starry, and the airs that stray,
 Sad wanderers from their golden home of day
 On night's black mountain, melt and fade away
 In sorrow that is music. Some there be
 Make them blue pillows on Geneva's sea,
 And sleep upon their best-loved planet's shade :
 And every herb is sleeping in the glade ;
 They have drunk sunshine and the linnet's song,
 Till every leaf's soft sleep is dark and strong
 Or was there ever sound, or can what was
 Now be so dead ? Although no flowers or grass
 Grow from the corpse of a deceased sound,
 Somewhat, methinks, should mark the air around
 Its dying place and tomb,
 A gentle music, or a pale perfume :
 For hath it not a body and a spirit,
 A noise and meaning ? and, when one doth hear it
 Twice born, twice dying, doubly found and lost,
 That second self, that echo, is its ghost.
 But even the dead are all asleep this time,
 And not a grave shakes with the dreams of crime :
 The earth is full of chambers for the dead,
 And every soul is quiet in his bed ;

Some who have seen their bodies moulder away,
 Antediluvian minds, most happy they,
 Who have no body but the beauteous air,
 No body but their minds. Some wretches are
 Now lying with the last and only bone
 Of their old selves, and that one worm alone
 That ate their heart : some, buried just, behold
 The weary flesh, like an used mansion, sold
 Unto a stranger, and see enter it
 The earthquake winds and waters of the pit,
 Or children's spirits in its holes to play.

* * * * *

STANZAS

FROM THE IVORY GATE

THE mighty thought of an old world
 Fans, like a dragon's wing unfurled,

The surface of my yearnings deep ;
 And solemn shadows then awake,
 Like the fish-lizard in the lake,

Troubling a planet's morning sleep.

My waking is a Titan's dream,
 Where a strange sun, long set, doth beam

Through Montezuma's cypress bough :
 Through the fern wilderness forlorn
 Glisten the giant harts' great horn,

And serpents vast with helmed brow.

The measureless from caverns rise
 With steps of earthquake, thunderous cries,
 And graze upon the lofty wood ;

The palmy grove, through which doth gleam
 Such antediluvian ocean's stream,

Haunts shadowy my domestic mood.

* * * * *

LINES WRITTEN IN SWITZERLAND

WHAT silence drear in England's oaky forest,
Erst merry with the redbreast's ballad song
Or rustic roundelay ! No hoof-print on the sward,
Where sometime danced Spenser's equestrian verse
Its mazy measure ! Now by pathless brook
Gazeth alone the broken-hearted stag,
And sees no tear fall in from pitiful eye
Like kindest Shakespeare's. We, who marked how fell
Young Adonais, sick of vain endeavour
Larklike to live on high in tower of song ;
And looked still deeper thro' each other's eyes
At every flash of Shelley's dazzling spirit,
Quivering like dagger on the breast of night,
That seemed some hidden natural light reflected
Upon time's scythe, a moment and away ;
We, who have seen Mount Rydal's snowy head
Bound round with courtly jingles ; list so long
Like old Orion for the break of morn,
Like Homer blind for sound of youthful harp ;
And, if a wandering music swells the gale,
'Tis some poor, solitary heartstring burst
Well, Britain ; let the fiery Frenchman boast
That at the bidding of the charmer moves
Their nation's heart, as ocean 'neath the moon
Silvered and soothed. Be proud of Manchester,
Pestiferous Liverpool, Ocean-Avernus,
Where bullying blasphemy, like a slimy lie,
Creeps to the highest church's pinnacle,
And glistening infects the light of heaven.
O flattering likeness on a copper coin !
Sit still upon your slave-raised cotton ball,
With upright toasting fork and toothless cat :
The country clown still holds her for a lion.
The voice, the voice ! when the affrighted herds

Dash heedless to the edge of craggy abysses,
And the amazed circle of scared eagles
Spire to the clouds, amid the gletseher clash
When avalanches fall, nation-alarums—
But clearer, though not loud, a voice is heard
Of proclamation or of warning stern.

Yet, if I tread out of the Alpine shade,
And once more weave the web of thoughtful verse,
May no vainglorious motive break my silence,
Since I have sate unheard so long, in hope
That mightier and better might assay
The potent spell to break, which has fair Truth
Banished so drear a while from mouths of song.
Though genius, bearing out of other worlds
New freights of thought from fresh-discovered mines,
Be but reciprocated love of Truth :
Witness kind Shakespeare, our recording angel,
Newton, whose thought rebuilt the universe,
And Galileo, broken-hearted seer,
Who, like a moon attracted naturally,
Kept circling round the central sun of Truth.
Not in the popular playhouse, or full throng
Of opera-gazers longing for deceit ,
Not on the velvet day-bed, novel-strewn,
Or in the interval of pot and pipe ;
Not between sermon and the scandalous paper,
May verse like this ere hope an eye to feed on't.
But if there be, who, having laid the loved
Where they may drop a tear in roses' cups,
With half their hearts inhabit other worlds ;
If there be any—ah ! were there but few—
Who watching the slow lighting up of stars,
Lonely at eve, like seamen sailing near
Some island-city where their dearest dwell,
Cannot but guess in sweet imagining—
Alas ! too sweet, doubtful, and melancholy—
Which light is ghttering from their loved one's home :

Such may perchance, with favourable mind,
 Follow my thought along its mountainous path.
 Now then to Caucasus, the cavernous.—

* * * * *

DOOMSDAY

IF I can raise one ghost, why I will raise
 And call up doomsday from behind the east.
 Awake then, ghostly doomsday !
 Throw up your monuments, ye buried men
 That lie in ruined cities of the wastes !
 Ye battle fields, and woody mountain sides,
 Ye lakes and oceans, and ye lava floods
 That have o'erwhelmed great cities, now roll back !
 And let the sceptred break their pyramids,
 An earthquake of the buried shake the domes
 Of arched cathedrals, and o'erturn the forests,
 Until the grassy mounds and sculptured floors,
 The monumental statues, hollow rocks,
 The paved churchyard, and the flowery mead,
 And ocean's billowy sarcophagi,
 Pass from the bosoms of the rising people
 Like clouds ! Enough of stars and suns immortal
 Have risen in heaven to-day, in earth and sea
 Riseth mankind. And first, yawn deep and wide,
 Ye marble palace-floors,
 And let the uncoffined bones, which ye conceal,
 Ascend, and dig their purple murderers up,
 Out of their crowned death. Ye catacombs
 Open your gates, and overwhelm the sands
 With an eruption of the naked millions,
 Out of old centuries ! The buried navies
 Shall hear the call, and shoot up from the sea
 Whose wrecks shall knock against the hollow mountains
 And wake the swallowed cities in their hearts.

Forgotten armies rattle with their spears
 Against the rocky walls of their sepulchres :
 An earthquake of the buried shakes the pillars
 Of the thick-sown cathedrals ; guilty forests,
 Where bloody spades have dug 'mid nightly storms ;
 The muddy drowning-places of the babes ;
 The pyramids, and bony hiding-places,

* * * * *

'Thou rainbow on the teartul lash of doomsday's
 morning star
 Rise quick, and let me gaze into that planet deep and
 far,
 As into a loved eye ;
 Or I must, like the fiery child of the Vesuvian womb,
 Burst with my flickering ghost abroad, before the sun
 of doom
 Rolls up the spectre sky'.

A lowly mound, at stormy night, sent up this ardent
 prayer
 Out of a murderer's grave, a traitor's nettly bed,
 And the deeds of him, more dread than Cain, whose
 wickedness lay there,
 All mankiud hath heard or read.

'O doomsday, doomsday come ! thou creative morn
 Of graves in earth, and under sea, all teeming at the
 horn
 Of angels fair and dread.
 As thou the ghosts shalt waken, so I, the ghost, wake
 thee ;
 For thy rising sun and I shall rise together from the sea,
 The eldest of the dead'.

So crying, o'er the billowy main, an old ghost strode
 To a churchyard on the shore,

O'er whose ancient corpse the billowy main of ships
 had ebb'd and flow'd,
 Four thousand years or more.

* * * * *

'World, wilt thou yield thy spirits up, and be con-
 vulsed and die ?
 And, as I haunt the billowy main, thy ghost shall haunt
 the sky,
 A pale unheeded star.
 Oh doomsday, doomsday, when wilt thou dawn at
 length for me ?'
 So having prayed in moonlight waves, beneath the
 shipwrecked sea,
 In spectral caverns far,
 On moonlight, o'er the billowy main, the old ghost
 stepped,
 And the winds their mockery sung.

* * * * *

THRENODY

Far away,
 As we hear
 The song of wild swans winging
 Through the day,
 The thought of him, who is no more, comes ringing
 On my ear.

Gentle fear
 On the breast
 Of my memory comes breaking,
 Near and near,
 As night winds' murmurous music waking
 Seas at rest.

As the blest
Tearful eye
Sees the sun, behind the ocean,
Red i' th' west,
Grow pale, and in changing hues and fading motion
Waue and die :

So do I
Wake or dream

* * * * *

THE IMPROVISATORE
IN THREE FYTTES
WITH
OTHER POEMS

THE IMPROVISATORE

THE INDUCTION TO THE FIRST FYTTE

DANK is the air and dusk the sky,
The snow is falling featherily,
And, as the light flakes kiss the ground,
They dance in mazy circles round ;
Like venturous nestlings in the shower,
Trying their new-fledged pinions' power.
The boughs ice-sheathed shake, bristling out,
And coral holly berries pout
In crystal cradles, like the shine
Of goblets flushed with blood-red wine .
Whilst whistling breezes hurry by,
Snow-clad December's feeble cry,
And the pale moonlight downward twirls,
Riding upon the snow's cold curls.
The subtle net of mist is wove,
And all below, and all above
Are twinkling through it, the stars beam
With many a flash and fitful gleam,
Like gold-scaled fishes struggling
In flimsy purse of fisher's ring.
Within the hall is banquet high,
Dazzling with torch and ladies' eye ;
Rich wine, with steaming wavelets' swell,
Is bubbling in its silver well,

And from the hearths warm streamlets flow
Of cheerful heat and flickering glow ;
With murmur loud the rebel fire
Is spitting forth its flameful ire,
Licking with curled fang the bar,
And reeking in the strife of war,
And waving through the smoke-dimmed air
Its blazing banner of red glare :
With spicy wreaths the goblet's crowned,
And jests and laughter sparkle round.
Such feasts of joy and ease repay
The toil and dulness of the day,
And lighten the dull hours of even,
Like stars that gild the dome of heaven.
' Now for a tale ', exclaimed the Knight,
' Breathing the love of ladies bright,
' And virtues high and sorrow deep,
' Till music's self shall seem to weep
' Call forth that wandering minstrel boy,
' That with his lyre-string loves to toy '.
The youth was brought, and low he bowed
Modestly to the noble crowd.
' Strike ', quoth the Knight, ' some simple tune,
' Like blackbird's song in leafy June ,
' And veil the words you chant aloud
' Of love, or war, in music's cloud ',
He said. With finger springing light
To joyous sounds, the songster wight
First tuned his lyre, then danced along
Amid the mazy paths of song.

ALBERT AND EMILY

I

'Twas on the evening of a summer day,
The frowning clouds were scudding fast away ;
The sky, which shone like one broad eye of blue,
Sprinkled the velvet turf with scented dew .

The prattling birds now ventured from their nests,—
Some spread their wings where the sweet balm
was shed,

Some vainly decked their variegated breasts,
And some were bustling to their tiny bed.

II

There was a flush of gladness in the west,
The sun was sinking from the realms he blessed ;
Huge snaky wreaths of mist were twining round
In spires, the steaming incense of the ground :

The flowrets downward cast their tearful eyes,
And seemed to sleep, so silently they hung ;
Save where the harebells waved in zephyr's sighs ;
To elfin ears, no doubt, a peal they rung.

III

The valley was all motionless and still ;
A sleepy streamlet murmured down the hill,
And on its mossy banks the violet blue,
The couch of perfume, in dark beauty grew.

In the mud stream there was a little isle,
Fragrant and cool, with liquid odours wet ;
Round it the dimpled current seemed to smile ;
'Twas like a gem in living silver set.

IV

Within that isle there was a flower-crowned mount
For ever moistened by a sparkling fount ;
'Twas as though Flora had been sporting there,
And dropped some jewels from her loosened hair :
On many a spangled stalk there blushed the rose,
And in its cup a drop of evening dew
Looked like a cloud-wept ruby, among those
The silken grass its tears of emerald threw.

V

There too were lilies, like a lady's cheek
Moistened with lover's kisses , there the sleek
And glittering turf was daisy-chequered o'er,
A beauteous carpet on the arbour's floor.
And there they lay, Albert and Emily,
As fair a pair of buds as e'er were seen,
The while she listened to his eager sigh,
And answered, smiling, all his glances keen.

VI

Her eyes were but half open, yet out peeped
Two starry balls, in watery radiance steeped,
Between the fringed lids, striving to hide
Their softness from the lover at her side :
And when he dared to look into those bright
And streaming crystals, with a timid stare,
He saw a smiling babe swathed in their light,
As if the god of love were cradled there.

VII

Those eyes were of a beauteous melting blue,
Like a dark violet bathed in quivering dew ;
Her mouth seemed formed for sighs and sportive guile
And youthful kisses ; and there played a smile

About her lips ; like an inconstant moth
Around a flower, now settling, and now flown
With every passing breath, as though 'twere loth
To stay and make the resting-place its own.

VIII

Her bosom too was fair, and calmly heaved
As her glad ears his fervent vows received ;
And ever and anon a flush was cast
Across its surface, as his warm sighs passed.
But, underneath that breast, panted a heart
In which pure love had fixed his sovereign seat ;
All ignorant of cold disdain or smart,
Responsive to her lover's sighs it beat.

IX

Her music-winged voice, from her sweet throat,
Came winding to the ear, like a small boat
Of sounds melodious buoyed upon a lake
Of flowing harmony ; and, when she spake,
Echo scarce sighed again, or breathed a sound
As soft as zephyrs buzzing in a tree ;
Or, as in noontide stillness float around
The honey-smothered murmurs of a bee.

X

Adown her fair and glowing cheek there hung
A cluster of slight auburn curls, that clung
To her brows tenderly ; a brilliancy
Fell on them from the sunshine of her eye ;
And, as she calmly breathed, those ringlets gay
Danced in her sighs upon her bosom white ;
So oft the wanderer in the noon of May
Sees golden insects glittering in the light.

XI

He was a fair and noble youth ; his face
Was feminine, and yet a manly grace
Adorned his features, and imperial thought
Sate on his lofty brow, whereon were wrought
The lineaments of wisdom ; but a cloud
Of love despondent oftentimes would lie
Across his front, and kindle up a proud
Swift flash of lightning in his lowering eye.

XII

Vows panted on his breath, and the soft air
Grew moist with dewy sighs which floated there ;
Their eyes were quaffing one another's beams,
Fixedly feasting on those amorous streams.
'Twas on the evening of a summer day,
A joyous moment in a youthful life,
When Albert to his heart, as there she lay,
Clasped that bright Angel upon earth, a wife :

XIII

(For they were plighted ; and the sunset ray
That kissed her lovely bosom, the next day
Would light them to the changing of their troth,
So long desired and waited for by both.)
He read in those deep glances, which the lash
So beautifully curtained from his sight,
Her perfect love, and answered with a flash
Of rapture from his eye, which streamed delight

XIV

Meantime the sun was fading fast away,
Stealing his glory from the closing day ;
The breeze low murmured with its downy breath,
And fanned the songsters into nightly death.

The glare of light was mellowed into shade,
And myriad-eyed night, the queen of thought,
The silent mandate of old time obeyed,
And blotted nature's beauties into nought.

XV

Quickly the moon, in virgin lustre dight,
Amongst the brilliant swarm cast forth her light,
Sailing along the waveless lake of blue,
Smiling with pallid light, a bright canoe.
The earth beneath, the silent-moving globe,
The restless sea, the hills, and fertile ground,
Were all enveloped in a slender robe
Of splendour, which she nightly weaves around.

XVI

Still there the lovers were, and her hand lay,
Wrapped round and round, by his, in gentle play :
It struggled softly with a feeble power,
Like a lone bee imprisoned in a flower,
That beats against the petals peevishly ;
Yet round her wrist still Albert's fingers clung,
And, as she looked at him half angrily,
To soothe her, with a murmuring voice he sung.

XVII

But oh ! what thought-dipped pen shall chain in words
Those sweet endearments, that, like truant birds,
Fled from their lips, and nestled in their ears,
Unruffled by sad sobs, unclogged with tears ?
What voice shall echo lovers' gentle jars,
And fancied griefs, and eager sighs, which stole
Airy-winged prisoners through mouth's ivory bars,
And whispers, bubbles of the melting soul ?

XVIII

Those words that waft the odour of the heart,
Those looks which chain their eyes together?—Art
Is all in vain. My young and feeble hand
Drops from its nerveless grasp the poet's wand.

Then let your feelings tell them all in thought ;
And to th' Æolian touches of the lyre
Hang the sweet tear, from Love's deep treasury
brought,
And tune the breathings of his cherub choir.

XIX

She listened to his love, and wove a wreath
For her young bard, of plants which grew beneath ;
She kissed them as she plucked, and tried to shower .
Upon his willing head each lovely flower.

Her head was pillowed on her waxen arm,
And to the light she turned her forehead bare,
And slumber'd lightly. Oh, what impious harm
Could dare to harass that sweet sleeping fair !

XX

The murmuring brook, and breezes without number,
Lulled with short harmony her peaceful slumber :
Then Albert looked with joy upon his love,
And called on her sweet visions from above .

And, ere he turned to sleep, he swept aside
The long grass from her cheeks, and gently spread
His mantle, which was warm and fully wide,
Upon her bosom and unshielded head.

XXI

They slept like infants. Not a breeze passed o'er
Their cheeks, but downy lullings with it bore :
Their calm lips moved not, and no throb of pain
Drove fitful streams from every swelling vein

To tinge with blood the fever-parched cheek,
But the thin moonlight kissed their eyes to rest,
And, like a mother's blessing, pure and meek,
It hovered o'er them in their silent nest.

XXII

But in their dreams, which thickly came and sweet,
They knew not with what sudden sweep a fleet
Of clustering clouds, cumbering the stars, were driven,
And scowled upon their slumbers from high heaven :
They poured unnumbered, until the sky
Was blotted every where : there seemed to stare
At intervals an hideous bloodshot eye,
That threatened them with flickering, doubtful
flare.

XXIII

At length the war-cry of the heavens burst out,
A deep, encreasing murmur ; like the shout
From darkling ambush of some savage foes :
At that loud peal the startled hills arose,
And growled out discord from their straining throats :
The clouds again gave forth a dismal roar ;
Again the mountains caught the deafening notes,
Like surges lashing on a rocky shore.

XXIV

And when those billows of fierce sound had passed,
Chasing their echo on the midnight blast,
A sullen silence brooded on the hill,
And every living thing was deadly still :
The air grew stagnant, not a truant breath
Ruffled the herbage ; every sound was hushed
On earth and sky, as if the hand of death
Had, with wild grasp, all life and motion crushed.

XXV

Then Emily awoke. She, in her sleep,
Had seen bright angel faces downward peep
With radiant kindness, and she seemed to hear
Whispers of comfort rustle in her ear ;
Her soul was bathed in gladness ; every thought,
That formed a picture in her clouded eye,
Fresh joy and pleasure to her feelings brought :
She woke—and saw the terrors of the sky !

XXVI

Fear choaked her screams ; she flew and rudely took
Reclining Albert by his arm, and shook
The sleeper with her weak and trembling might,
That he might know the dangers of the night.
She stirred him ; but he 'woke not—Oh ! that sleep,
'Twould never leave him ; slowly she laid down
His heavy arm, and then began to weep ;
He started up, and saw the tempest frown—

XXVII

As he was rising quickly from the ground,
She heard him move, and gladly turned around ;
He clasped her hand , 'twas trembling and chill,
But between his he wrapped it fondly still.
She tried to whisper to him all her dread,
The stifled words fell back into her breast ;
Then on his arm she softly drooped her head,
Which to his swelling heart he silent pressed.

XXVIII

He murmured comfort in her ear, and chid
The sorrow which her shivering bosom hid,
Then gently bore her with uplifted arm
From clouds which glared with thunder and with
harm.

Near them an oak in sturdy strength uprose,
And proudly stretched a bulky trunk of power ;
Quick to that spot the harassed lover goes,
To shield his precious burthen from the shower.

XXIX

The clouds anew with fury 'gan to swell,
Till from their depths sprung forth an hideous yell,
Darting along the wind, stunning the earth,
And echoing horribly with fiendish mirth.

The parting clouds that hovered in the heaven
Wild cataracts of tempest downward threw,
The veil of darkness in the midst was riven,
And the swift blast with wings of lightning flew.

XXX

Pale Emily said nothing, but she wept,
And shuddering into his bosom crept ;
There in despair she closed her deafened ear,
And sought a false security from fear.

He thought upon the lovely one that laid
Her helpless beauty on his trusty heart,
And muttered hope to the distracted maid,
Resolving that in death they ne'er should part.

XXXI

She heard not what he said, but yet she smiled
Because she heard his tones ; with terror wild,
Close to his beating bosom still she clung,
And nestled in his vest her head, that hung.

He tried again to speak, again to cheer
The timid girl ; but his grief-blighted voice
Withered upon his tongue ; and freezing fear
Crept to her heart 'midst the appalling noise.

XXXII

They stood entwined together. With a shock
The thunder ceased, and, like a parted rock,
The darkness split asunder : a huge mouth
Seemed to be yawning wide, with grin uncouth ;—

It was a deep and roaring grave of fire !

She heard a sudden crash, she felt him start,
And thought he gasped a groan ; she drew him
nigher,

And fierce with horror pressed against his heart.

XXXIII

It throbbed but slowly ; now it seemed to stay
Its faltering beat—quickly she turned away,
And hushed her breathing, but she heard no sound,
She felt no fluttering of his breath around.

His arms froze stiff about her—when she spoke

He answered not again ; she tried to shriek,
And started back ; he fell against the oak,

And never soothed her, or essayed to speak.

XXXIV

She bent her ear close to him on the ground,
And strained with pain to listen—there's no sound.

She whispered, he replied not ; wildly bold,
She clasped his hand, but it was clammy cold ;
Nerveless it dropped upon his upward side.

She pressed with both her arms his silent head ;

Some fiendish tongue close in her hearing cried,

With death-like accent, ' Mourn for Albert dead ! '

XXXV

With terror-stricken eyes she looks behind—
Is't fiendish laughter that bestrides the wind ?

And, hark again ! a wild and fearful knell,

Another dismal, superhuman yell !

She turns ; a sea of faces meet her view—
Foaming, distorted features far and near,
Lolling their tongues, that reek with sulphur blue—
Into her melting eyes with gibes they peer.

XXXVI

She feels her forehead glow, her bosom burn.
Unhappy lovely one ! and where to turn
She knows not , for her eyes, before so bright,
Are dimmed and dazzled at the wizard sight.
She felt her quivering heart with pain grow sick,
It withered in her breast and died away ;
Her throat was clogged and her breath came thick ;
She tottered down and by her lover lay.

XXXVII

Next morn the bridemaids found the hapless pair :
She met them first, and with an idiot stare
Gazed on them, and rushed on ; then gambolled back,
To lead them swiftly through the well-known track
They passed along the valley, o'er the hill,
After her beck—but not a word she spoke.
She brought them to the island, there stood still,
And pointed wildly to the scathed oak.

XXXVIII

Looking that way, she burst into a roar
Of hideous laughter, then they hurried o'er,
And saw amongst the scorched and upturn grass
A shapeless, black, and incoherent mass.
The tree was one huge cinder ; from it broke,
With suffocating stench and threatening flare,
Up to the sky, a pillar of thick smoke,
Which wreathed around and clouded all the air.

XXXIX

While they stood, dumbly wondering at the sight
Of death and horror, onward came the white
And woe-worn Emily—with vacant face
That loathsome lump she hastened to embrace,
And pressed it to her bosom, and then hid
Her soft cheek under it, and, madly gay,
She called it love, and with quick accent chid
The lifeless matter for its voiceless play.

XL

She cast some fading blossoms on the spot,
And muttered words which ears received not ;
Her eyes were fixed upon the empty air,
And at some well-known face appeared to stare.
But recollection struck her, and she threw
A woeful glance upon the awestruck group,
And, with a noiseless footstep, onward flew
Into the woods, with a discordant whoop.

XLI

They bore the wreck of Albert to a grave
O'er which the graceful willows sadly wave,
And with their dewy tears each evening weep
Upon the lovely form that lies asleep.
But she, sad wanderer, amidst the grove
Built a poor bower, and laid her throbbing head
Upon the grave, calling upon her love,
All motionless and ghastly as the dead.

XLII

In the bright summer evenings she would lie
Basking in light, and with a melting eye
Look for her Albert, welcoming the air,
Thinking she felt his spirit glowing there ;

Then to the light caresses of the wind
She bared her breast, and pouted lips to kiss
The downy breeze ; it pleased her mourning mind ;
So would she wanton in her simple bliss.

XLIII

Thus lived she all her summer months away,
In useless wailings and fantastic play :
No noxious thing crawled near her loveliness ;
The little birds too pitied her distress,
And sung to her, and innocently crept,
To her warm bosom In a narrow way
A hind benighted, whilst all others slept,
Saw 'midst the trees her face, and heard her lay.

EMILY'S PLAIN

Oh ! why art thou gone, love ?
Oh ! why art thou gone ?
Thou hast left me alone, love,
Broken-hearted, alone.
My heart is grief-frozen,
My bosom's in pain ;
Dost thou wish, love, to cure it ?
Oh come back again.
Thou swor'st, a fond lover,
Here ever to stay ;
Three months are past over,
Yet still thou'rt away.
I've pulled thee some flowers,
I've spread thee some heath,
I'll deck thee, return'd, with
A rosy-red wreath.
But ah ! the wind whispers,
The murmuring wind,
' Thine Albert is dead, and
Has left thee behind '.

Return for an instant,
Mine Albert, I pray,
And lap me in glory
And bear me away.

XLIV

In autumn she grew speechless ; no light shone
In her dead eye, her memory was gone.
Some of the peasants fed her, like a tame
And hungry robin, every day she came
To the kind hand that gave her food ; at last
She kissed it timidly, and gently smiled ;
A quivering tear across her paleness passed,
And she sobbed dumbly, like a voiceless child.

XLV

One chill September morning she was found
Silently kneeling on her lover's mound ;
The passers thought she slept, but when they tried,
Her lifted hands fell coldly by her side.
Her eyelids were half closed, her bloodless pair
Of open lips seemed gratefully to bless,
As if stern death had heard her simple prayer,
And kissed her beauty into stoniness.

XLVI

They laid her underneath the self-same grass,
In her dead Albert's bosom ; they who pass,
In summer evenings, hear unearthly sighs,
Dazzled by glimpses of concealed eyes.
A thornless rose and lily mark the grave,
That grew spontaneous from the buried pair,
And ever, while in zephyr's sighs they wave,
A downy perfume whispers in the air.

THE INDUCTION TO THE SECOND FYTTE

THE minstrel ceased ; the music's wings
Swept lingering through the bounding strings ;
With parting kiss his fingers brushed
The startled lyre, and all was hushed.
Again the feasters sang and laughed,
Again the beaded wine was quaffed.
The youth retired alone, unseen,
To wander o'er the fringy green
Of moonlight meadows, and to gaze
Upon the water-mirrored rays
Of stars, that sable midnight crown,
Like radiant blessings peeping down
From heaven upon our slumbers. There
He found the solitary fair
Agnes, in pensive mood reclined,
Feasting with dreams her thoughtful mind ;
Light from her eyelids seemed to soar,
Her beauteous cheeks lay clustered o'er
With curling tufts of amber thread,
That twined around her pillowed head,
Like some plump peach, in sweetness ripe,
Spangled with many a dewy stripe,
Courtèd and kissed by every breeze,
Just severed from the parent trees,
That sleeps transparent grapes among,
On waving tendrils thickly strung.
At his approach she rose awhile,
And becked him onward with a smile,
In which her soul looked forth. ' Once more ',

She cried, ' a tale of fairy lore :
Sing, minstrel boy, of them who stray
In rainbow livery by day,
And nightly sleep in closing breast
Of summer flowers ; or those, that dressed
In robes of flame, 'mongst marshes dance,
And dazzle with a wavering glance
The frightened clown ; or those who creep
Under our eyelids whilst we sleep,
And dally with our thoughts : thou know'st
Full many a tale of shrieking ghost,
And wandering fay, and gibing sprite,
That laugh away the hours of night ' .
Her words flew gently from her tongue,
Like bees whose wings are honey-clung,
Bubbling through sweetness. As she said,
The youthful songster waved his head,
And summoned music from its sleep
Among the chords ; with murmur deep,
And faltering accent, thus he sung,
Whilst his hand roved the strings among ;
And she, with eyelash downward cast,
Caught his wild story from the blast.

RODOLPH

I

THERE is a massy cloud of dismal hue
Climbing reluctantly the pathless blue ;
It is the pall of the departed day ;
And, after it, the self-same silent way,
A heavy troop of mist-clad mourners wend,
And down the lampless, dim horizon bend :

The grave and cradle of short-lived time,
 Ocean, receives them with its gaping billows,
 And with the hoarse notes, which its death-song
 chime,
 Lulls on its breast the infant day it pillows.

II

Then Twilight, the dank ghost of murdered hours,
 Creeps with still, clammy pace around the bowers,
 Summoning from its rest the drowsy owl,
 And listening cheerlessly to wolfish howl,
 Rocking its wan, chill spirit on the cloud,
 And weeping dewdrops to the wailings loud
 Of the consoling blast ; and mournfully
 Baring to earth its breathless, fog-veil'd breast,
 Declaring how the nameless moments die
 Of the red wound, that blushes in the west.

III

But on their best-loved flowers, that perished brood,
 Cast their last kiss of perfume and of blood,
 Tinge with their dying breath some opening bloom,
 And breathe one sigh, then hurry to their tomb.
 Thence the broad rose in velvet bed of moss,
 And pink-fringed daisy with its golden boss,
 The chequer-leaved carnation, plump-cheeked pip
 Of bristling holly, 'mongst its armed leaves,
 Borrow their crimson richness, and the lip
 Of innocence in infant sleep that heaves.

IV

There was a calm of sleep among the hills,
 The whispering zephyrs chid the brawling rills.
 It was a time for musing ; every gale
 In murmurs seemed to syllable a tale
 To the mute flowers, which bent their buds to hear,

While evening lent their closing eyes a tear.
It was a place for lovers' gentle plaint,
Afar from glittering show and boisterous halls,
Where, from her bower of blossoms, Echo faint
Attuned her voice to bubbling waterfalls.

V

A silent lake, the mirror of the night,
There lashed in mimic rage and playful spite
Its lily-fringed bank, and, gaily bold,
Crowned its dwarf bullows with the moonlight gold,
Casting around its spray in pearly showers,
A soft bequest to all the thirsting flowers.
Upon the couch of moss, a lovelorn wight
Sate, calmly listening to the tittering breeze,
Then tuned his lyre, and roused, with finger light,
The sleeping Tstrings, and sang such words as
these :

THE MADRIGAL

How sweet is the voice of the beauty I love,
As the violet's scent at eventide ;
As the first, softest sigh of the nestling dove,
As the laughter of fairies when they ride.
As soft as the evening breeze,
As sweet as the blackbird's song,
As gentle as summer bees
That flutter the garden among.
But oh ! when she chides with her beautiful lips,
'Tis like the gay butterfly's playful spite,
Which peevishly spurns the fair blossom he sips,
Trampling its sweetness with all his weak might.
As loud as the angry showers,
As harsh as the zephyr of May,
As dark as the noon-day bowers,
As bright as the glowworm's ray.

She warbles : 'tis the cheerful lark that sings,
 Bidding good-day to the new-risen light ;
 'Tis the sound of the hymning angels' wings,
 Rustling 'mid the sunbeams in their flight.
 As lovely as bees' sweet tune,
 That ever in honey is dipped ;
 As tender as cowslips in June,
 Ere the dewdrops from them dripped.

Aye me ! when she timidly hinted her truth,
 It fell and it lightened my heart with love,
 Like the busy whisper of morn in its youth,
 That tells of the beauties and glories above.
 As pure as the evening dew,
 That sleeps in the folded flowers ;
 And as clear as the heavenly blue,
 Which shines on the noon-day hours.

VI

He ceased. And was it Echo, that poured round
 So sweet, so sad, so musical a sound,
 Winding around his sense with fainting note,
 Like closing circles in a parted moat ?
 It cannot be : again are borne along
 The whispered burthens of a distant song.
 There seemed an hundred voices flying nigh,
 Bearing their sweetness to his strained ear ;
 At length the flowrets, with a scented sigh,
 Tremblingly echoed, ' Follow, follow, Dear ;
 Follow, follow, follow,
 Over mount and over hollow,
 Follow '.

VII

'Twas like the sounds we dream of. Such a call
 Summons the spirit from its earthen hall
 When smiling infants die ; it sunk and rose
 In tuneful wavelets, lulling to repose

Suspicious fear ; it rocked upon the wind
Awhile, then fled and left a scent behind :

Rodolph sprang up ; it was not Anna's song,
Who bade him stay ; it had attractive force :
Forgetting her, who made him wait so long,
He rushed to trace the music to its source.

VIII

Then from the lake was heard a sudden sigh ;
Straightway the sportive billows arched on high,
And from the flower-strewn bed of the calm stream
Up shot a fiery pillar, like the beam
Of love which lightens through the slender veil
Of maiden, listening to a lover's tale.

A ball of fire rose through the yawning stream,
Spouting its fevered venom with a roar,
Whirling around the lake its lurid gleam.

And snowing its red light upon the sleepy shore.

IX

The kindled water, with a foaming rush,
Strove its defying foe at once to crush ;
The flame spurned the huge billows with a gnash
Of curled flame, and water-spouting dash
And struggled onward with a piercing wind,
Leaving a deep and steaming scar behind.

It reached the surface : and a red canoe
Of flickering brightness, with a motion fleet,
Seemed the recoiling water to pursue,
And bristled fiercely up to Rodolph's feet.

X

It stopped upon the bank, a ball of glare :
Ring within ring of tinted flame was there,
And from the midst an eye-like violet spark
Fearfully glimmered through the murky dark.

About the outer ring of livid flame
 A swarm of quivering sparklets went and came,
 Like fiery bees, whilst hollow murmurings,
 And the hoarse lisps of the muttering light,
 Spate nourishment ; they, with their darting wings,
 Seared the dew-cherished turf and flowers bright.

XI

From out the dingy smoke—which slowly wound,
 Hissing, in serpent folds along the ground—
 A fiery hand appeared, and beckoning slow,
 With waving fingers urged the youth to go.
 Meanwhile his sense was charmed with a song,
 That drew him, with the clue of sound, along.
 The rippling lake was hushed, as if each nymph,
 To catch those notes of chaunted melody,
 Were pillowed softly on her couch of lymph,
 Or 'twere the saucy wavelets' lullaby.

THE SONG

HITHER haste, and gently strew
 His velvet path with odorous dew
 Which slept on roses' cheeks a night ;
 Stud the turf with the golden flower
 In which the glowworm builds its bower,
 And gladdens with its tender light.
 Sprinkle here the twinkling shower
 On each perfume-stifled flower.

Hither haste, and gently fling
 All the opening buds of spring ;
 And, if a drooping leaf appear,
 Tinge it with this coloured roll
 Which I from the rainbow stole,
 And hang a spangle on its ear.
 Sprinkle here the twinkling shower
 On each perfume-stifled flower.

Hither haste with daffodils,
That court the glass of gliding rills,
And violets with their blue veils o'er,
And the king-cup, in whose bell
The thief of honey loves to dwell,
And paints it with his yellow store.
Sprinkle here the twinkling shower,
On each perfume-stifled flower.

THE CHANGE

They are waiting for you,
Whose forms you ne'er saw ;
Their eyes dimmed with dew,
The warm sigh they draw.
Then follow, follow, follow ;
Over bank and over hollow
Still with fearless footstep follow.

XII

Silence engulph'd the words. The waving hand,
Still beckoning from the mist, flamed its command ;
And, with clear sparks that wandered from the mass,
In burning lines traced ' Follow ' on the grass.
Rodolph waved onward, and the silent guide
Passed on before with bounding leaps and wide ;
And as he stepped, fresh buds bloomed at his feet,
And tiny voices whispered in his ear,
Whilst fragrant gales wept music, him to greet,
And all was sweetness he could see or hear.

XIII

Still on and on the scorching leader flew,
And, where it leaped, startled the sleeping dew ;
Putting on varied forms the time to while,
And passing gaily many a dreary mile :

Now as a dog it scoured along the vale,
 With winking eye of blue and smoky tail ;
 Now like a mazy serpent creeping through
 The piercing briars, twisted from the light,
 Its twining body all a changeful hue,
 Its venomed jaws with sparkling fury white.

XIV

When on the hillocks they began to roam,
 It darted down a cataract of foam,
 With dancing spray and bubbles of red blaze
 Chasing each other through the bickering maze.
 Still on they went—o'er plains, o'er vale, o'er knoll ;
 At length the wheeling splendour ceased to roll,
 And pointed onward to a low-browed cave ;
 Then sprung up from the ground with chirrup gay,
 And, like a fire-winged lark, hastened to wave
 Its plumes, and bounded on its airy way.

XV

It was upon a turfy mound, below
 A brook was glittering with pallid glow,
 And the cave's arch was bowered o'er with stems
 That nodded gently, laden with bright gems ;
 Whilst from within came notes of melody,
 Now sad, now gay, and chased each other by :
 And, *fleeing with the mazes of the tune,*
 Soared words alight with tenderness and love,
 Like the coy beams of the reluctant moon,
 Struggling in winged embrace of clouds above.

XVI

That chaunt was sweet as bubbling notes that spring
 From smooth, deep founts, that faint into a ring.
 The love-sick sighs of water-nymph unseen,
 Toying with broad-leaved weeds so rich with green :

It welcomed him, and seemed his steps to invite
From the unseemly mist of clammy night.

He entered with expectant, glad amaze,

And soon he found that narrow lane of moss
Led to a hall, built up of crystal blaze,
And softened all around with silken gloss.

XVII

Against the walls fresh-blooming jasmine twined,
Unscorched by heat, unblasted by the wind ;
And through its curling tendrils incense flew,
Kissing in wavy clouds the bosomed dew,
Or streaming faintly in the amorous air,
Like the light, tangled locks of ladies' hair.

Through silken curtains, gently curved below,

Stilly crept moonlight beams ; so glittering weeds
Peep through the cloudy waters where they grow,
Among the fickle sands and pebble beads.

XVIII

Deep in the leaves of mossy-bedded posies
Of sickly lilies, violets, and roses,
Nestled bright balls of amber radiance,
Which cast on all the shrubs a starry glance ;
Like the bright silkworm, which its cradle weaves
Unseen amongst the mulberry's curled leaves :

And on the down-lined leaflet's inside moss

Drooped lengthened tears of crystal, quivering
studs

Of melted light ; around they poured their gloss,
And dyed, with mimic rainbows, all the buds.

XIX

Up at the further end, 'mid spicy wine,
Breathing the odour of its parent vine,
Were toying maids, some joining their fair faces
In rosy garlands, beating measured paces ;

Some pelting one another in their mirth
 With glistening leaves, which wavered to the earth.
 Some on curved arms and softly drooping head
 Mused with closed lips and fringy curtained eyes
 Among the upward flowers, as though they read
 Some bee-graven song, or heard the blossoms'
 sighs.

XX

Upon a velvet couch of mossy rings,
 Enamelled o'er with bud-like glitterings,
 Sate she who seemed the mistress ; round her played
 A maiden band, which all her signs obeyed.
 The startled youth she beckoned silently,
 Who waded through the flood of harmony
 Up to her side ; she motioned him to sit,
 But nothing spoke. The mossy throne he pressed,
 While from her looks keen arrows seemed to flit,
 And pierce with lovely cruelty his breast.

XXI

Her eyes were rooted on the shepherd boy,
 And in their depth of blue swam love and joy :
 Her mouth ! Oh pardon me, thou coral cave,
 Prison of fluttering sighs, cradle and grave
 Of noiseless kisses, if I fail to tell
 The beauty and the grace that in thee dwell.
 'Twas like a pouting, dew-bespangled flower,
 Breathing deliciousness ; her slender tongue
 A babbling bee in it, with all his power,
 Murmuring the sweetness forth which round him
 clung.

XXII

Then sweetly she began those lips to move,
 And whispered in his ear a lay of love.
 Her words were drops of music ; as they swept,
 Clammy with odour, folds of softness crept

Snakily round his soul ; he tried to brush
Off from her lips that love-enamelled flush ;

She stayed him gently, ' First, loved Rodolph,
swear

To be mine only ', smilingly she said.

' I vow ' ! he cried, ' and let me seal it there '.

At those words, lightning-like, the vision fled.

XXIII

His ears were stunned by an hoarse, fiendish roar
Of laughter ; he fell leaden on the floor,

And all had vanished. It was dark and cold ;

A putrid steam rose from the clammy mould :

The moon darts through a crevice ; at his lips

He sees a skull's mouth yawn, which thickly drips

With nauseous moisture ; upward to his thigh

He stood in bones and dust of bodies dead ;

And part was newly melting, part was dry,

And part, with recent slaughter, glaring red.

XXIV

He waded onward, and the wingèd dust

Flew up and choaked him, the dry, skinny crust

Cracked at his steps ; the bones with feeble crash

Bent under him, and many a steaming splash

Of melting flesh showered on him as he stood ;

The track was slippery with spouting blood.

Fitfully through a distant, narrow chink

The dismal light crawled in : he saw below

A body-jammèd vault with yawning brink ;

He felt the breath of death against his temples
glow.

XXV

Just at his feet a grinning skeleton

Stretched its worm-twined arms of chalky bone,

And rattled its thin finger in the blast ;
 Its spikèd teeth were dumbly chattering fast,
 As if its death-dream were disturbed ; by him
 Another lay with yawning jawbone grim,
 Through which the cold wind whistled ; down its
 cheek
 Crept death's chill sweat. Rodolph essayed to
 pass,
 But fear chained down his strength ; with struggles
 weak
 He plunged among the death-cemented mass.

XXVI

At length he heard some yawning, muttered groans,
 And feeble shufflings of the brittle bones,
 As if the bodies rose to welcome him ;
 Athwart his eyes dark shadows seemed to swim,
 And leave a death-kiss there. A moist hand soon
 Pressed into his, and by the shivering moon
 He saw his welcomer, the ribs that kept
 No prisoned heart within their crumbled bars,
 And to his eyeless sockets fat worms crept,
 Whose eyes peeped out like lurid meteor stars.

XXVII

He closed his eyes, but still that shape was there,
 Mocking his agony with lifeless glare.
 Rodolph held up his fever-parchèd hands,
 And twined his head round in those swollen bands ;
 He clutched his hair, all clotted with fear's dew,
 And crusted with the choaking dust that flew :
 He sank down heavily amid the heap,
 And felt the worms come, coldly nibbling
 His tottering limbs ; then down came leaden sleep,
 And struck him into slumber with its wing.

XXVIII

Day passed, and day ; no Rodolph tuned at eve
The twilight pipe, that taught the woods to grieve ;
Morning and noon the shepherd's hue and cry
Roused the dim echo on the mountains high.
The sabbath came. And with the early morn
The sexton rose the chancel to adorn,
And wake the sleeping bells ; he walked along
Close by the charnel-house ; there came a sound
Of grating laughter mixed with ribald song,
As though the dead were 'wakened in the ground.

XXIX

With trembling hand he fitted the old key
In the nail-studded door ; his straining knee
Forced back its rust-tuned hinge ; with fearful wink
He peeped within through a decaying chink,
And saw the madman playing, like a child,
With the foul carcase-crumbs around him piled :
He tossed the bones about, and whispered low
With bloodless lips ; and with the struggling
snakes
And jagged splinters fashioned round his brow
A garland, gemmed o'er with bloody flakes.

XXX

The dreading pauper flew, and left alone
That sad and thoughtless man to his wild moan,
Who crawled out from his dungeon, and his days
Lurked out amongst the woods and untrod ways.
He sate among the tombs and called the dead
With voice familiar ; and by some 'tis said
He ate forbidden food : the leper toad,
The screeching owl, and the rank carrion crow,
Tamely frequented his obscure abode,
And slept together in his bosom low.

XXXI

He sometimes howled at the bright moon ; forgot
The power of speech, and o'er his cheek a blot
Of melancholy black was spread ; he knew
Where berried night-shade and hoar hemlock grew,
And made his bower of them : the beldames blind,
The wrinkled crones, heard on the midnight wind
His raving whoops, and shuddered o'er their fire,
Telling the tale : he laughed in madness too
When the loud thunder rolled, and cloud-clad choir
Of sweeping winds in the dank midnight blew.

XXXII

At last, upon a twilight eve, he stole
Into the village. Under a dark knoll
Of elms there was an old moss-cushioned seat,
O'er which he'd scrambled with his infant feet ;
He dropped upon it gently. A huge tear
Swept his stern features at that prospect dear,
Still he said nothing But the children crept
With terror from their sports, and, lisping, told
Of the dread comer ; the next one who stepped
Up to the hillock found him dead and cold.

THE INDUCTION TO THE THIRD FYTTE

THE tale was said. Fair Agnes rose,
And tripped to court a night's repose ;
There in her chamber soon she lay,
(Her every dream with warblings gay
Of fairies serenaded,) hidden
'Midst folds of warmth, while night-clouds, ridden
By thought-winged visions, and bright fringed
With rosy thoughts, her slumbers tinged ;
Like bashful fragrance, buried deep
In curling leaves, that nightly weep
Their melted souls of sweets away.
The minstrel turned : a feeble ray
Of quivering came slowly nigh,
And ancient Margaret caught his eye.
She was an old and tottering crone ,
Her skin was shrivelled round the bone,
And seemed a cerecloth wrapped around
A 'wakened mummy. O'er the ground
Her feet were wandering doubtfully ;
And in her stagnant, frozen eye,
The last blue spark was glimmering.
The years behind had stayed to fling
The silver crown of reverend age,
The halo that adorns the sage,
Upon her thinly sprinkled curls,
That grew, like vegetable pearls
Of mistletoe, around her brow,
And bounded on her temples low.

Her voice came stumbling o'er her teeth,
Half frozen by her misty breath,
Chaining the ear with broken links
Of muttered words. With joyful winks,
And shivering hands, that tried to clasp
The songster in their feeble grasp,
She hailed the youth, and drew his arm
Into her own, while to a warm
Small room she led him ; there she placed
All that is sweet to sight or taste.
The wine that rolled in sunny tears
In gold-lined cups with massive ears ;
While from the bright depth quickly spring
Bubbles in many a bounding string,
Like golden eggs with sweetness swelling,
Whence, on the surface gently dwelling,
On steamy wing of brightness rushes
The halcyon of those sparkling gushes,
Pleasure, hatched beneath the bowl,
That warbles rapture to the soul.
The while he drank, she praised his power,
And bribed his presence for an hour ;
A lay of wildness loud he sung,
While the old dame in silence hung
Upon the marvels of his tongue.

LEOPOLD

I

The battle is over ; the dews of the fog
The wings of the eager vultures clog ;
And the souls of the dead, in many a flake,
Are winding aloft, a misty snake

From its blood-clotted lair with fresh slaughter tinged :
And the clouds of heaven, with sable fringed,
Are weeping the murder : the spirit of ill
Is snuffing the incense upon the hill,
And basking with joy in the mortal steam,
And dabbling in the blood-red stream.
The tempest is moistening its blast in the blood
Which trickles along in a scurfy flood.
The dead are all reeking, a ghastly heap,
Slippery with gore, and with crushed bones steep ;
As if the flesh had been snowed on the hills,
And dribbled away in blood-clammy rills :
A swamp of distorted faces it lay,
And sweltered and bubbled in the broad day.
There was one who had fainted in battle's crash,
Now he struggled in vain with feeble splash
Under his warm tomb of motionless dead ;
At last he dashed backward his bursting head,
And gasped in his hideous agony,
And ground his firm teeth, and darted his eye ;
Then wriggled his lips in the last prayer of death,
And mixed with the whirlwind his foamed breath.
Another, with gold-hilted sabre girt,
Had crawled from amid the fermenting dirt,
And was creeping with torture along the ground,
Tracking his path with an opening wound ;
But a plunderer, spying his failing form,
Scattered his brains as hot food for the storm.
Hard by was a smiling young infant at rest
On his death-frozen mother's chilly breast,
And he filled her deaf ears with his piteous cries ;
And with tiny fingers opened her eyes,
Which spurted upon him a thick, gory clot,
While he smiled and fingered the spreading blot.
Amongst the foul carcasses slowly there went
A reverend hermit, weak and bent,
Muttering prayers with a tremulous tongue,

Whilst groans of despair at his deafened ears hung.
As he slipped on the dead men they started and howled,
And the lapping dogs stirred not but angrily growled.
A carrion crow, that was whetting its bill
On a naked bone, which was reeking still,
Heavily flapped its broad wings for a flight,
But could not soar upward, so gorged all night.

II

The holy man raised up the smiling boy,
Who laughed, and held his blood-tinged fingers up ;
His lip was moist, as though he'd made a cup
Out of some foaming wound : he turned and cried,
And struggled from the gentle father's side,
And played with the torn flesh as with a toy.
His kind preserver, with some pious verse,
Hymned him to sleep within his arms ; the child
Breathed balnuly, and in his vision smiled.
And there he lay, swathed in that hallowed rest,
Like a late blossom pillowed on the breast
Of shrivelled leaves, as on an early hearse.
The hermit was old father Hubert , he
Who dwelt alone upon the pathless hill,
The friend of man in action and in will ;
From whose soft eye, beneath the silver crown
Of age, beamed a pure sprite, like fresh rain, down
Upon the weak and suffering. If there he,
As we will hope there is, benevolence,
And love of men and heaven, and charity,
That pours libations from the balmy eye,
Left in the world, his heart was the pure shrine
Of all that's beauteous, kindly, and divine.
And so his words came, as the holy scents
From altar in prayer-echoing recess,
Steaming with clemency and holiness.
He was a man would make us love mankind,
Though all the rest were worms as vile as blind.

III

With joy, that winged his feet, kind Hubert bore
His blooming burthen onward to his cell,
A rock-walled tower, alone within the dell,
Which beaded ivy bowered, and a bright stream
Girdled, besprinkled with the sun's bright beam,
As though 'twas tracked by the golden oar
Of unseen voy'ger ; on its banks there smiled
All plants of sweetness ; the prim daisy, and
The studded cowslip on its slender wand,
Like a small, natural sceptre ; violets too,
Dark coloured, seemed the passer's smile to woo ;
And leaf-veiled lilies of the valley, wild,
Shunning the others, like a froward child .
They mottled variously old Hubert's path,
And seemed to know his footstep, for they cast
Up their soft cups and quivered as he passed.
He loved them as his children, innocent
And sweet, and guiltless of unkind intent ;
He moistened them when the breath-scorching dawn
Denied them dew : of these he plucked a set,
The freshest and the fairest, and most wet,
And strewed them plentifully on a nest
Of moss, and laid the baby to its rest.

IV

Oh it is sweet to watch o'er innocence
Asleep, and mark the calm breast fall and rise,
And the veined veils that casket up the eyes,
And smiles dimple the cheek, for then we know
Good thoughts sweep by upon the gales that blow.
Hubert brought up in his benevolence
The orphan child, and called him Leopold :
It was a froward babe, and never laughed,
Nor stole a kiss by courtesy or craft,
Nor with its outstretched arms his bosom clipped,

Nor in the evening blithely round him tripped.
Its eye was leaden, motionless, and cold ;
It skulked in corners, and shunned sulkily
The good man's lessons ; never conned a word
Of prayer or holiness. He oft was heard,
When all was silent save the midnight wind,
Muttering the secret thoughts of his dark mind ;
But lowering fled from the monk's rosary,
And howled to drown his morning hymn of joy,
So he grew on, this sullen wayward boy,
Chaining his dismal thoughts in their birthplace,
A blotting cloud in Hubert's heaven of grace.

v

He knew no playmates but the stormy blasts,
Which seemed to whisper some dark secret dread
As he would sleep among them, with his head
Swathed in lank dripping tresses, and cry out
With joy to his rude playmates, while his shout
(He thought) was written in the lightning red.
Oh ! how he longed to bind his bronzed brows
With a bright snake of fire, wove from the flame
Of those swift glimpses ; or to hear his name
Roared in the thunder which they gild : he raged
And bared his breast, wherein were cribbed and caged
The thoughts that seared it. Then with mops and
mows

He darted through the storm, like some wild bird :
He spurned the wind, and stretched his longing arms,
Hugging the tempest and its brood of barms
With horrible delight ; his whooping yell
Struggled with the boarse blast ; its striving swell
Dwelt on the clouds, and in the vales was beard.
His bursting veins seemed swollen with venom'd fire ;
His eye was ringed with lurid flashiness,
And to his leaping heart he seemed to press

Some fanged folded thing of fieriness ;
His lips, he felt, foamed lava, and his hair,
A cluster of writhed fire-snakes, to the air
Spate out the lightnings of its scorn and ire.
After such maddest fits his eye was sunk
Deep in its socket, and his lifeless trunk
Lay, like a lump of clay, amid the rank,
Long, twisted grass that decked his chosen bank.
And, as he lay entranced, the silent breeze
Swept from his foam-bathed lips such words as these

VI

‘ Ye swiftly flitting hours of day and night,
Half dim and dusk, half sunny bright,
Like feathers moulting from the pied wing
Of breathless time, who flutters evermore,
This ball of earth and ocean girdling,
Searching the crevices of sea and shore,
Which still defy his strength with billowy roar,
To spy some cranny which the light ne’er saw,
Chaotic and forgotten, wherein he
May ’scape the gulp of the sepulchral jaw
Of loitering Eternity.
Our lives still fall and fall, flake upon flake,
Like piling snow upon the waves
Of some vast lake,
And melt away into the caves,
Whilst rising bubbles waste them as they break,
Like ye, from our own substance ; as ye pass
Our essence still ye pilfer, onward fleeing ;
We vanish, as a thing that never was,
And become drops of the huge ever-being.¹
Oh tell me, if ye silent wisdom bring,
Ye smallest links of time’s unravelled chain,
That join to buried first the unborn last,
The embryo future to the sunken past,

¹ See note p. 453.

Tell me (for ye have not been forged in vain,
And ye have seen the fountain whence we spring),
What is this life, that spins so strangely on
That, ere we grasp and feel it, it is gone ?
Is it a vision ? Are we sleeping now
In the sweet sunshine of another world ?
Is all that seems but a sleep-conjured ghost,
And are our blindfold senses closely curled,
Our powerful minds pent up in this frail brow
But by our truant fancy ? Are we a groping host
Of sleepers gazing in this twilight gleam,
Unconscious dupes of some thought-peopled dream ?
But I will think no more, lest haply I,
If I erred on in thought's dim wilderness,
And scared myself with shadows, ne'er should die,
But my astounded soul might petrify
And freeze into time-scoffing stoniness'.

VII

There would he lie, aye ; and there was a cave,
Hideous and dark, choaked up with thorny weeds,
Moss-shrouded, that ne'er cast around their seeds ;
And the dew lay among them, where it fell,
For months and months, and then it 'gan to swell
And turned to poison, where they still would wave
Inward ; where tangled knots of loathsome roots
Crept, webbed, on the roof. The dusk recess
Was moistened o'er with drops of clamminess ;
And, 'mid rank bunches of envenomed shrubs,
Glittering with serpents' lathered foam, and grubs
Naked and filthy crawling on the shoots,
A stagnant well steamed out dense, stifling mists,
Whose brim was silvered with the slimy track
Of tardy snails, or toads with mottled back,
Which hundred years hatched in the chilly stone.⁷
Around the fog-filled cave no wind was blown

Save pantings of huge snakes, bedded in twists
Of purple nightshade, and rough hemlock's hair.
The very owls fled, screeching, from the den,
And leathern bats were stifled there. No men
Ever set foot there till mad Leopold came
And sucked the water in, to quench his flame.
Well for its murkiness he loved the lair.
There, breathless, would he stretch his limbs among
The hideous crawlers ; feel the forked tongue
Of crested serpents tamely lick his hand,
And curl around his legs with sparkling band.
There would he mark discoloured damp, that crept
Cloggedly down, and listen to the sound
Of the huge drops that pattered on the ground
From the damp, mouldy clay, and see dark shapes
Mock his deep thoughts with gibes and fiery gapes,
Whole days unmoved, until his spirit slept.

VIII

One wretched day (he had been sleeping long)
He started from his slumber, roused again
By some sharp pang of intellectual pain ;
He cast with fevered balls a shuddering glance
Upon his couch, and, eager to advance,
Trampled the torpid snakes he slept among,
That lashed their slimy tails, when from the gloom
Of yellow chilliness that brooded o'er
The well in clouds, and swept along the floor,
Hatching parched blasts of poison, there up-wound
To him an indistinct, word-shaping sound,
Breathing the clammy vapour of the tomb ;
It crept into his ears, and bound him there,
As though by spell-sprung roots, and thus it spake :
' Dost thou, oh human reptile, seek to slake
Thy thirst of power ; to ride along the deep,
And dally with the lightning, and to sleep

Under the tempest's wing, robed in the flare
Of the fierce thunder-bolt? Answer, weak slave'.
'I do, I do', he cried, with struggling voice.
'The thunder hears, and doth approve thy choice.
All shalt thou earn by the priest Hubert's death.
Mix with the wind this night his feeble breath,
And cast his blood into yon green-scummed wave'.
The voice was gone, the echoes all were hushed,
And, by some fiend impelled, on Leopold rushed;
He scoured along the plain, the streams he passed
Breathless, and entered Hubert's cell at last.

IX

He entered. The old man was sleeping; prayer
Steamed murmuring from his lips; a mouldered cross
Which the moon gilt, rose on a mossy boss
Behind his pallet, strewn with leafy wreaths,
O'er which the mellow autumn colour breathes;
A swinging lamp lit up with fitful flare
The dingy cave, now grasping at the air
With upstretched claw of fire, now sinking down,
And quivering in blue atoms. Leopold stood
And gazed upon the slumber of the good.
Tranced Hubert's soul was dallying with dreams
Flowery and pure, that wander on the beams
Of the moon earthward, with the night-breeze blown
Into the ears of sleepers. 'Darling child',
The old man uttered, waking, 'art thou here
Again to please me?' With a guilty fear
All Leopold's limbs grew stiff: the fading spark
Expired, and left the cavern damp and dark;
And then a spirit blasted in his ear,
With syllables of fire, the unnamed deed,
The sentence of the hermit. 'Twas decreed.
The dagger trembled in the ingrate's grasp;
It fell; he heard his friend's last struggling gasp,

And felt the blood-stream bubbling warmly round .
His fingers, and drop down with gushing sound ;
He heard the echo startle at the groans
Half choaked with feebleness ; those faultered moans
Muttered his name with blessings. Then he fled,
And left his friend and kind preserver dead.

x

He plunged the blushing dagger in the well
Of stagnant filth, which foamed up hideous din
And grating laughter at the acted sin :
Then Leopold felt his heels winged with flame,
And scorching breezes quickly went and came,
Feathering his limbs with sparks. The earth all fell
Diminishing below him, while he strode
Among the winking stars ; as there he stayed
To taste the torrents that around him played,
Athwart his path the steed of tempest passed,
Its nostrils foaming with the whirlwind blast ;
And as it stumbled, with hoofs comet-shod,
Among the craggy clouds, forked lightning's spark
Tracked through the midnight its destructive course,
Whilst from his wind-lulled cave the thunder hoarse
Echoed its snortings. The blind nightmare too,
Crawling upon a cloud of murky hue,
Strolled lazily along, ridden by dark
And grinning phantoms. Still he wandered on
Among the elements : he lay by night
Under the tempest's wing, where fogs and blight
Are cradled, or a messenger from death
Flew down with feverish dreams and sucked the breath
Out of parched lips until the soul was gone.
Thus centuries were passed. One night of fog,
When winter with his damps began to clog
The pestilential air, he issued forth
Upon a mist-winged frost, and came to earth,

XI

Oh woman ! flower among this wilderness
Of wickedness and woe, whose soul of love
Lies scent-like inmost, steaming out above
Its incense of soft words ; how sweet to sip
Entranced the voice of rapture from thy lip,
And taste thy soul in kisses. Thou dost bless
Our earthly life with looks, and shinest afar,
Gilding our night of misery like the star
That beams with hope upon the mariner :
Our guardian angels, robed in lovely clouds,
Ye still attend our steps in smiling crowds,
Friends, mothers, sisters, comforters, and wives.
Darkness and sorrow blot our lonely lives
When we forget or spurn ye. If ye err,
Justice should weep but frown not. Lovely voice
Of angels, caught and caged in a place
Hallowed by pity, tenderness, and grace,
Echo of every better, softer thought
That man is blessed with. Vain the solace sought
From wine, that bubbles with disease and steams
With embryo riot, thine, oh thine alone
Are the soft moments, when our souls have flown
From out this crust of flesh, and tremblingly
Hang on our lips, and vainly strive to fly
On pinions of bright words, and join with thine.
Oh that the magic skill of verse were mine
For one brief moment, that in lines of gold
Thy truth might be embalmed ! But I am bold,
And worthier spirits have embowered thy shrine
In wreaths of poesy, with scents that glow,
So briefly to our tale of guilt and woe.

XII

He came to earth. It was a hamlet rude
He entered ; in the midst a building stood

Embraced by creeping plants, which murmured low
 Their voice of sweetness to the evening shower.
 One little casement in that humble bower
 Pressed out its chequered lattice in the leaves,
 And kissed them into varied blúshes. Sheaves
 Of buds stood bristling up ; in many a row
 Curving laburnum wept its golden tears
 Of perfume, and the saucy jasmine tossed
 Its puny blossom and its curled leaf glossed
 With narrow green : they all appeared to peep
 In silent joy on some fair thing asleep.
 Then Leopold on his dusky charger rears
 Himself among the shuddering boughs. What sight
 Lay melting on that snowy couch of white ?
 A beauteous daughter of mankind. Her cheek
 Bloomed through ethereal dust, that veiled its bliss
 From the down-falling light and night-wind's kiss.
 He saw—he saw and loved. Next night again
 He came, but viewed the beauty racked with pain.

XIII

* * * * *

His look, his breath had choaked her soul. Death's
 hand

Had stiffened her fair tresses, and the grasp
 Of his cold clammy fingers in their clasp
 Mottled her beauty with damp mildewed stains.
 That eye of beams is stagnant ; no more rains
 The dew of pity on the buds below,
 Which echoed with their sighs. A dismal band
 Of mourners is around, and sable woe
 Clouds every feature. Then the sullen knell
 'Waked from its nest within the muffled bell,
 And shadowy trains of black moved slowly on,
 And priests shrouded their prayers in solemn tone.
 He heard no more. Away, away he flew—

Over the waves that roared, the storms that blew
 The clouds that lowered, till the cave was nigh,
 The fatal cave with its dun canopy
 Of venomed mist. He came ; the dark depths roared,
 To welcome him to death : a curse he poured
 That made the cold stones chatter, and the toads
 Crawl, withered by his shrieks, from dank abodes
 Where poison hatches reptiles. Echo, bound
 In mossy walls, oozed fear-drops at the sound
 But gave no answer. Still his breathing seared
 The slimy snake, that, on curled tail upreared,
 Hissed forth its fright. The waveless, stagnant well
 Sunk deep, and hid within its muddy shell.

XIV

* * * * *

The cloud of doom is coming. Ocean spouts
 Its depth of darkness forth, and night sweeps down
 To blend her horrors with it ; onward blown
 Foams the palled tempest. Then upstands the sea
 With all its host of waters loftily,
 And bubbles shrieks of wrath, and vomits routs
 Of carcasses, twined round with monsters' scales
 That suck the limbs down. Spiked with lightning,
 sails
 Fire, with its snaky tusks and muttering threat,
 That peers into the skies ; its roots are set
 Far, far below the fathomless abyss
 Of the deep waters. With a searing hiss
 The enemies moved on. Then Leopold sent
 A roar of horror up into the sky,
 While the sea foamed upon his feeble cry.

* * * * *

The storm was hushed. Men tell not where he went.

THE END OF THE THIRD FYTTE

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE COMET¹

THE eye of the demon on Albion was turned,
And, viewing the happy, with envy he burned ;
He snarled at the churches, the almshouse he cursed,
Till hate of their virtue his silence had burst :
' Why waves yonder harvest ? why glitters yon tower ?
My hate they despise, and they scoff at my power.
Then lend me assistance, ye elements dire,
Attend at my call, air, earth, water, and fire '.
He spoke ; and, lo ! pregnant with flame and with
 pest,
The scorch of the blast his rough mandate confessed,
The flame of the typhus, the stifling damp,
And there rode the blast that will smother the lamp.
' In vain you command us ; the heart-easing prayer,
And the sounds of the hymn, as they wind through
 the air,
Blunt the arrows of sickness which pestilence bear '.
Then loud was the roar as the wind fled away,
Till earth trembled, and spoke from the regions of day :
' The shocks of my mountains roll cataracts back,
And from north to the south could the universe crack,
But the heart of the ocean I may not attack '.
The thunder was o'er and the motion was still,
But the god of the waters thus murmured his will :

¹ Inserted in the *Morning Post*, July 7, 1819.

' All Europe my waves in a moment shall hide,
And the old world, and new, be swallowed by tide,
But the Albion isle shall my prowess decide '.

The waves had sunk down, and the billows were
hushed,

Ere the flame of destruction before him had rushed. —

' Whole cities and empires have died at my blast,
So strong is my power, my rapine so fast ;
But Britain, unhurt, shall endure to the last '.

In vain frowned the demon : ' Still terror I'll try,
And the envoy of Yamen¹ shall fleet through the sky '.
But while virtue and justice in Britain remain,
The fire-brand of Yamen shall dazzle in vain.

QUATORZAINS

I

TO PERFUME

EXQUISITE masquer, who dost changeful flit
Upon the sun-hatched zephyr, basking now
In the broad light, 'mongst roses thou dost sit,
On crimson throne, in the thorn-guarded bough,
Veiled by pink curtains, which will scarce admit
To thine embrace the bee with velvet brow ;
Or, winged as incense, rising to the sun,
A dove-like messenger thou bearest the prayer ;
Or dost alight where streamlets gently run,
Gilding in dew adown the morning air ;
Or bashfully dost common notice shun,
Dividing as a kiss the ruby pair,
Which the coquetting night-wind only sips :
Stay till I fetch thee from those mellow lips.

¹ The Hindo god of fire.

II

THOUGHTS

SWEET are the thoughts that haunt the poet's brain
Like rainbow-fringed clouds, through which some
star

Peeps in bright glory on a shepherd swain ;
They sweep along and trance him ; sweeter far
Than incense trailing up an outstretched chain
From rocking censer ; sweeter too they are
Than the thin mist which rises in the gale .

From out the slender cowslip's bee-scarred breast.
Their delicate pinions buoy up a tale
Like brittle wings, which curtain in the vest
Of cobweb-limbed ephemera, that sail
In gauzy mantle of dun twilight dressed,
Borne on the wind's soft sighings, when the spring
Listens all evening to its whispering.

III

A RIVULET

It is a lovely stream ; its wavelets purl
As if they echoed to the fall and rise
Of the capricious breeze ; each upward curl,
That splashes pearl, mirrors the fairy eyes
Of viewless passer, and the billows hurl
Their sparkles on her lap as o'er she flies.
And see, where onward whirls, within a ring
Of smoothest dimples, a dark fox-glove bell,
Half stifled by the gush encircling ;
Perchance some tiny sprite crawled to that shell
To sleep away the noon, and winds did swing
Him into rest ; for the warm sun was well
Shaded off by the long and silky down :
So I will save it, lest the elf should drown.

IV

TO SOUND

I

SPIRIT, who steal'st from silence's embrace,
Lending to mortal thoughts a powerful wing ;
Now marching slow with solemn pace,
The broken cries of passion syllabing ;
Now gambolling, with sprightly grace,
In ladies' voices as they sing :
How thou dost prison up in lovely wreaths
The hearer's soul, like buds, whose folded leaves
Conceal their lusciousness in rosy sheaths.
How, when some hapless beauty, sighing, grieves,
Thou barbest every arrowed sigh she breathes,
And giv'st a sting to sobs she quickly heaves,
Till down our tears in trickling gushes roll,
Tears, the pure blood-drops of the wounded soul.

2

Thou hangest up in the caverns of our ears
Thy precious dewdrops, and our inmost souls
Echo thy beauty. When the lightning sears,
Clad in thy power the lowering thunder rolls,
The scornful laugh of elements. Past years
Thou mournest when the bell suddenly toils ;
And then thou load'st with iron tone the gale.
Thou hoverest with a wing plumed with sweet
notes,
Moth-like, around the chords where music's veil,
A mist raised from tune's ocean, dusky floats ;
Or, fountained in the heart of nightingale,
With tide of murmurs swellest along her throat.
Sweet soother of my senses, flutter near,
Or sleep for ever in my charmed ear.

V

TO NIGHT

So thou art come again, old black-winged Night,
 Like an huge bird, between us and the sun,
 Hiding, with outstretched form, the genial light ;
 And still, beneath thine icy bosom's dun
 And cloudy plumage, hatching fog-breathed blight,
 And embryo storms, and crabbèd frosts, that shun
 Day's warm caress. The owls from ivied loop
 Are shrieking homage, as thou cowerest high,
 Like sable crow pausing in eager stoop
 On the dim world thou glutt'st thy clouded eye,
 Silently waiting latest time's fell whoop,
 When thou shalt quit thine eyrie in the sky,
 To pounce upon the world with eager claw,
 And tomb time, death, and substance in thy
 maw.

VI

A FANTASTIC SIMILE

A LOVER is a slender, glowing urn
 On beauty's shrine, his heart is incense sweet,
 Which with his eye-lit torch young love doth burn ;
 Then from its ardour cloudy ringlets fleet,
 That we call sighs, and they with perfume turn
 Upwards, his mistress' whisperings to meet.
 The breezy whispers and the sighs embrace,
 Like pink-wing'd clouds mixing above the hill,
 And from their lovely toyings spring a race
 Of tears, which saunter down in cheek-bank'd rill,
 Silvering with sparkling coil the fair one's face ;—
 Twin dewdrops which her startled senses spill
 From violet's eyes, that hide their tender hue
 Deep-caverned in a fringed lake of blue.

VII

ANOTHER

'Tis a moon-tinted primrose, with a well
Of trembling dew ; in its soft atmosphere,
A tiny whirlwind of sweet smells, doth dwell
A ladybird ; and when no sound is near
That elfin hermit fans the fairy bell
With glazen wings (mirrors on which appear
Atoms of colours that flizz by unseen),
And struts about his darling flower with pride.
But, if some buzzing gnat with pettish spleen
Comes whining by, the insect 'gins to hide,
And folds its flimsy drapery between
His speckled buckler and soft, silken side.
So poets fly the critic's snappish heat,
And sheath their minds in scorn and self-conceit.

VIII

TO SILENCE

HUGE, viewless ocean into which we cast
Our passing words, and, as they sink away,
An echo bubbles up upon the blast ;
Oh ! could thy waves but vomit in their play
Those unseen pearls which thou dost clasp so fast,
And haug them at our ears washed in thy spray,
What endless stores our casket, memory,
Would brood on, and enjoy ! But wherefore now
Dost thou engulph our talk, and floodest by
Uphurling clouds upon our moody brow ?
E'en when we dumbly muse sometimes a sigh
Of bursting blossom, or hoarse groan from bough,
Break through thy foam, like Venus, ocean-
sprung,
And to our ears upon the wind are swung.

IX

TO MY LYRE

My lyre ! thou art the bower of my senses,
 Where they may sleep in tuneful visions bound ;
 These trembling chords shall be their breeze-kissed
 fences,

Which are with music's tendrils warmly wound,
 As with some creeping shrub, which sweets dispenses
 And on each quivering stalk blossoms a sound.

My lyre ! thou art the barr'd prison-grate
 Where shackled melody a bondmaid sleeps,
 And taunting breezes as her torturers wait :

With radiant joy the hapless prisoner peeps
 And sings delight, with freedom's hope elate,
 When some fair hand upon the surface sweeps ;
 And still she beats against the prison bars,
 Till silence comes and smothers her pert jars.

X

TO POESY

SWEET sister of my soul ! thou, that dost creep
 Gently into my bosom, and there lie

In converse with my spirit, and now weep

And anguish it with kindly agony ;

Now draw it with thy lore, dreadful and deep,

Through wild, appalling dreams ; then tenderly
 Toy and change smiles : oh ! now I feel thee pour

Into my breast thy gushing tears of sound,

And bury thy sharp fang in my heart's core ;

Now balm with thy sweet breath the throbbing
 wound.

Thou and my soul oft on thought's pinions soar,

Clasping like dewdrops in a flower, around

That cast their rainbow-eyed pale beams, and
 kiss

And tremble in their loveliness and bliss.

XI

A CLOCK STRIKING AT MIDNIGHT

I

HARK to the Echo of Time's footsteps ; gone
Those moments are into the unseen grave
Of ages. They have vanished nameless. None,
While they are deep under the eddying wave
Of the chaotic past shall place a stone
Sacred to these, the nurses of the brave,
The mighty, and the good. Futurity
Broods on the ocean, hatching 'neath her wing,
Invisible to man, the century.
That on its hundred feet a sluggish thing
Gnawing away the world, shall totter by
And sweep dead mortals with it. As I sing,
Time the Co'ossus of the world, that strides
With each foot plunged in darkness, silent glides,

TO A BUNCH OF GRAPES

RIPENING IN MY WINDOW

CLUSTER of pregnant berries, pressed
In luscious warmth together,
Like golden eggs in glassy nest,
Hatched by the zephyr's dewy breast
In sultry weather ;
Or amber tears of those sad girls ¹
Who mourn their hapless brother ;
Strung closely on the glossy curls
Of yon fair shrub, whose zigzag twirls
Clip one another ;
Or silent swarm of golden bees
Your velvet bosoms brushing,
Dropped odorous from the gummy breeze,
Lingering in sleep upon the trees,
Whilst summer's blushing ;
Or liquid sunbeams, swathed in net
Spun by some vagrant fairy,
Like mimic lamps fresh trimmed and set
In thick festoons, with ripeness wet,
Moonlight to carry ;
Or drops of honey, lately stolen
From the hive's treasury,
Bubbles of light, with sweetness swollen,
Balls of bright juice, by breezes rollen,
And bandied high.
I watch with wondrous care each day
Your little spotted blushes,
Dyed by the sun's rude staring ray ;
And soon I hope you'll ooze away
In sunny gushes.
Then shall ye, veiled in misty fume,
In polished urn be flowing ;
With blood of nectar, soul perfume,
Breathe on our cheeks a downy bloom
With pleasure glowing.

¹ The Sisters of Phaeton ; see Ovid, *Met.* ii.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Extract from the late Mr George Darley's *Letters to the Dramatists of the Day*, published in the *London Magazine* under the pseudonym of 'John Lacy'.

'How the bloom should gather on these two celebrated authors' cheeks, to find a *woman* and a *boy* instructing their skilless manhood in the vernacular language of the British Muse! Joanna Baillie and young Beddoes, a female extern and a freshman, teaching Byron and Barry Cornwall, after a regular graduation in the college of English Minstrels, their own poetical mother tongue, the very elements of their native poetical dialect, which they have either forgotten, or corrupted with a base intermixture of foreign principles. * * * As to the particular of metre, it may be said that our authoress preceded the epoch of prose-poetry, and that, had it been in vogue in her time, she would have adopted the inglorious system. Being a woman, perhaps she would; being a woman of manly genius, I think she would not. But ay or no has nothing whatever to do with the merits of the question; prose-poetry depends neither on Miss Baillie's opinion of it nor mine, but on its own reasonableness or absurdity. However, here is *Minor* Beddoes, born in the very zenith of this mocksun of poetry, while it is culminating in the mid-heaven of our literary hemisphere, shining in watery splendour, the gaze and gape of our foolish-faced, fat-headed nation: here is *Minor* Beddoes, I say, born amidst the very rage and triumph of the Byronian heresy, nay, in a preface more remarkable for good-nature than

good sense, eulogizing some of the prose-poets—yet what does Minor Beddoes? Why, writing a tragedy himself, with a judgment far different from that exhibited in his own panegyrical preface, he totally rejects, and therefore tacitly condemns and abjures the use of prose-poetry. But it was not the boy's judgment which led him to this; it was his undepraved ear, and his native energy of mind, teaching him to *respue* this effeminate style of versification. The Brides' Tragedy transcends, in the quality of its rhythm and metrical harmony, the Doge of Venice and Mirandola; just as much as it does Fazio, and the other dramas which conform to the rules of genuine English heroic verse, in the energy of its language, the power of its sentiments, and the boldness of its imagery—that is, incalculably. The impassioned sublimity of this speech of Hesperus is a nearer approach to the vein of our dramatic school of tragedy, than I can recognize in either the rhetoric or poetic:

Hail, shrine of blood, etc.

There is a good deal of extravagance here, a good deal of hyperbolical rambling; the luxuriant growth of a fancy which maturer judgment will restrain. The author appears, also, to be making too evident a set at sublimity in this passage; it begins too designedly in the established form of solemnific invocation, and runs too long a gauntlet of second-person pronouns, the rhapsodist's right hand monosyllable, time immemorial. Nevertheless, it betrays a mind in which the rudiments of tragic power are, to my eyes, eminently conspicuous, tragic powers of the very highest order. I have frequently mentioned the *os magna sonans*; this is the first great qualification for a tragedist, and this qualification the author of the Brides' Tragedy most undeniably possesses. Nay, more: considering the *os magna* as a quality as well as a qualification

there is one species of it *only* which is peculiar to tragedy; that which is proper to epic poetry is essentially different from this. But the *rara avis* among dramatists is he who possesses the tragic species; and not the epic; for any one conversant with the English stage from Shakspeare downwards, will easily perceive that almost all our dramatic writers mistake the *epic* for the *tragic* vein of magniloquence¹; now, the author of *The Brides' Tragedy* is a *rara avis* of this kind. Otway's hollow heroics, Lee's loud bombast, and Young's elaborate grandiloquence, though they may all be species of the *os sonans*, are none of them of that species proper to tragedy, which can be defined mentally, not verbally, but which may be said to be chiefly differenced and distinguished by *passion*, by being more dependent on sense than sound, on the things presented to the fancy than on the words bruited to the ear. It is from the appearance of this qualification in the author of *The Brides' Tragedy*, that I would anticipate, with an expectation perhaps too sanguine, a better and more genuine tragedy from his pen than *Venice Preserved*, *Theodosius*, or *the Revenge*, which are all formed on the erroneous and epic principle. His tragedy is certainly a most singular and unexpected production, for this age; exhibiting, as it does, this peculiar knack in the author for the genuine *os* of the stage. After all the abuse my conscience has compelled me to pour forth on the plotlessness, still-life, puling effutiation, poetry, and prose-poetry of modern plays, it is grateful to my heart to acknowledge that this first great quality of legitimate drama is broad upon the surface of *The Brides' Tragedy*. I am almost tempted to confess, after the perusal of our

¹ Compare Lady Macbeth's first and second soliloquies, with Zanga's first and last *speeches*, as instances of this.

Minor's poem, that I have been premature in pronouncing the decline of English poetry from the Byronian epoch: and to express my confidence that tragedy has again put forth a scion worthy of the stock from which Shakspeare and Marlow sprung. But whilst I pay this cordial tribute of admiration to our author's genius, and indulge in this prospect of his eventual success as a dramatist, I cannot help avowing my fears that he is deficient in some qualifications, which, although not as splendid, are just as necessary to complete a tragedist, as that *one* which I have unreservedly allowed him. The *os magna*, alone, will not do; even that which is not epic or lyric, but strictly dramatic. He exhibits no skill in dialogue. He displays no power whatever in delineation of character. If it were possible, speaking of works of this kind, to make a distinction between the *vis tragica* and the *vis dramatica*, I should say that he possessed much of the former, but little of the latter. The energy, passion, terribility, and sublime eloquence of the stage, he appears perfectly competent to: his facilities in the artful developement of story, the contrastment and individualization of characters, the composition of effective dialogue, the management of incidents, scenes, and situations, etc are as yet *under the bushel*, if their non-appearance in his tragedy be not a proof-presumptive of their non-existence in his mind. In a word, *The Brides' Tragedy* does not exhibit any faculty in the author of representing or imitating human life in a connected series of well-ordered scenes, characters, and dialogues; but it exhibits that qualification of mind, which, if it informed such a ready-made series, would render it not only a mere work of genius, but a work of legitimate dramatic genius, an effective tragedy. We must, however, take off the edge of these exceptions to our author's flexibility of genius, by the recollection of two facts. First,

that his tragedy was writted premeditatedly for the closet, and not for the stage; hence poetic tragedy, more than dramatic, was his object. Secondly, he is a 'minor'. With the hope that he *will* devote himself to the stage, and with the expectations that increasing years will multiply his dramatic powers which are now apparently confined to one, I conclude my observations on his work'.¹—*London Magazine*, Dec. 1823.

¹ It may be necessary, perhaps, for me to disavow all intimacy with the author of *The Brides' Tragedy*, his family, friends, or acquaintance. I was not even educated at the same university with him, nor do I personally know anyone who was.

NOTES

(BY T. F. KELSALL)

Page 295. The dramatic fragment, which the editor has entitled *Lovers' Identity*, is apparently a very juvenile composition; being in the author's early handwriting, and found with other juvenilia, in a note-book belonging to him at Charter-House.

Page 297, No. vi. Evidently a boyish composition—written in a very unformed character.

Pages 298-305. All these dramatic fragments, taken from another and later note-book and printed exactly as they there stand, belong to the author's college period; those which follow were written subsequently, and such of them, as were apparently intended for insertion in the *Death's Jest-Book*, are here distinguished by the letters D. I. B.

Page 319. Alfarabi. This also is a juvenile composition, and is inserted in the collection, as indicating at what an early period Beddoes acquired freedom of style and command of language, and how apparent even then, amid his boyish mock-heroics, was the imposing character of his mind, loftily rising from the merely sportive, as a stratum of rock pushes nakedly up through the surface of lower vegetation.

Page 324. The Romance of the Lily was given by Beddoes to the editor of *The Album*, a quarterly magazine published by Andrews of Bond Street, and appeared in its sixth No. (August 1823) with a few words of introduction from the editor of that extinct periodical, and a note of the author's appended. Both introduction and note are here reprinted.

Introduction. 'The following poem is from the pen of a young author of great promise and rising fame. He has begged us to withhold his name, "being unwilling", he says, "to risk any notice he may have gained, on so trifling a production as *The Romance of the Lily*". The epithet "trifling" may be applicable to the piece with reference to its length, but we are confident our readers will not deem it so on the score of merit. We think that, in more than one passage of wildness and original beauty, they will be reminded of Mr Shelley'.

Note. The following narrative is given by Meric Casaubon, as an extract from the diary of a friend (perhaps his father, for his expression is, my F.) who seems to have heard it related by Bishop Andrewes—

'Kalend. August. Narrabat hodie mihi rem miram, Reverendiss. Præsul, Domin. Episcop. Eliensis: quam ille, acceptam auribus suis a teste oculato et auctore, credebat esse verissimam. Est vicus in urbe Londino, qui dicitur, vicus Longobardorum. In eo vico parœcia est, et ædes parœcialis, in quâ fuit Presbyter, homo summæ fidei et notæ pietatis. . . . An. 1563, quo anno si unquam aliàs, pestis grassata est per hanc urbem Londinum. Narravit igitur hic parochus et passim aliis, et ipsi quoque Dom. Episcopo, sibi hoc accidisse. Erat illi amicus in suâ parœciâ insignis, vir, ut omnes existimabant, probus et pius. Hic, peste correptus, advocavit presbyterum illum amicum suum; qui et ægrotanti affuit, et vidit morientem, nec deseruit nisi mortuum; ita demum repetit domum suam. Post horas satis multas a morte hujus, cum ipse pro mortuo esset relictus in cubiculo; uxor illius idem cubiculum est ingressa, ut ex arcâ promeret lodicem, ut est moris. Ingressa, audit hanc vocem, operi intenta; "Quis hic est?" Terreri illa, et velle egredi, sed auditur iterum vox illa; "Quis hic est"? Ac tandem comperto esse mariti vocem, accedit ad

illum ; " quid " ait " Marite ; tu igitur mortuus non es ? Et nos te pro mortuo compositum deserueramus ". " Ego vero ", respondit ille, " verè mortuus fui ; sed ita Deo visum ut anima mea rediret ad corpus. Sed tu uxor, " ait, " si quid habes cibi parati, da mihi ; esurio enim. " Dixit illa vervecinam habere se, pullum gallinaceum, et nescio quid aliud : sed omnia incocta, quæ brevi esset paratura. " Ego, " ait ille, " moram non fero ; panem habes ", ait, " et caseum " ? Quum annuisset, atque petiisset afferri, comedit spectante uxore : deinde advocato Presbytero, et jussis exire e cubiculo omnibus qui aderant, narrat illi hoc. " Ego ", ait, " vere mortuus fui ; sed jussa est anima redire ad suum corpus, ut scelus aperiram ore meo, manibus meis admissum, de quo nulla unquam cuiquam nota est suspicio. Priorem namque uxorem meam ipse occidi manibus meis, tanta vafritia, ut omnes res lateret ". Deinde modum perpetrati sceleris exposuit ; nec ita multo post expiravit, ac *vere tum mortuus est.*

The naiveté of this narration is well followed up by Meric's assuring the reader that there is no absolute necessity for making it " an article of his faith : yet ", says he, " I thought them very probable, because believed by such a man ". For this singular instance of believing by proxy, see Casaubon's preface to " A true and faithful relation of what passed for many years between Dr John Dee and some spirits ". Folio, 1659.

Page 341. Letter from Oxford.

' The mathematic picture, near your fire '.

A fine portrait by Giorgione, much valued by its owner.

Page 346. *The Boding Dreams*, and *The Reason Why*, with the connecting blank verse at p. 307, were substituted by the author for the opening dialogue of the third scene of the first Act of *Death's Jest-Book*, which, however, the editor was unwilling to displace.

Page 348. The piece entitled *Love's Last Messages* appeared in the *Athenæum* of July, 1832, unknown to the author, who, on being complimented about it by a correspondent, replied that he 'imagined he had burnt the only copy some years ago in Göttingen'.

Page 353. This 'bridal serenade', is the song expunged from *Death's Jest-Book*, as too 'Moorish'.

NOTE BY BEDDOES

PAGE 426, Sc. *Immortality*. With regard to the sentiments which directly follow, they are such as none but a madman could entertain. It is now, however, so much the fashion to esteem every *bad* thought which a man writes a specimen of his own character, that perhaps the author had better explicitly state his utter abhorrence of all such doubts. When a writer is drawing a wicked or weak character, it is necessary for him to make such a being's words agree with his actions; and one might as well consider the successful actor of Iago or George Barnwell a villain, as accuse the author of the wickedness or madness which he describes, upon the *sole evidence of such writings*.

(Original Dedication to 'The Brides' Tragedy')

TO

THE REV. H. CARD, M.A., F.R.S., F.A.S.

ETC., ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR SIR,—As you have, in a late publication¹, which displays your usual learning and judgment, mentioned this performance in terms, perhaps dictated by friendship rather than critical impartiality, I must beg to inscribe it to your name.

There are many prejudices with which a playwright has to contend, on his first appearance, more especially if he court the reader in lieu of the spectator; and it is so great an effort to give up any established topic of condolment, that we can hardly yet expect those, who call themselves 'the critics', to abandon their favourite complaint of the degeneracy which characterizes the efforts of contemporary tragic writers. But let any unprejudiced person turn to the productions even of the present year; let him candidly examine the anonymous play, *The Court of Tuscany*, and compare its best scenes with the masterpieces of Rowe or Otway; let him peruse Allan Cunningham's poetical drama, which has won the applause of the highest literary authority of the day; let him dwell upon the energetic grandeur and warlike animation which Croly has so successfully displayed in portraying the restless spirit of Catiline; and I think his verdict will place this

¹ See Dissertation on the Herefordshire Beacon, Note.

age not the last among those which have done honour to the British stage.

These instances are sufficient to attest the flourishing condition of dramatic literature, but, alas! we must seek them in the closet, not in their proper home, the populous theatre, for there we shall meet with a sight, sufficient to deter the boldest adventurer from hazarding the representation of his best and most vaunted piece, our countrymen barely enduring the poetry of Shakspeare as the vehicle of a fashionable song or a gaudy pageant. Even the theatre itself however may appear 'not yet enslaved, not wholly vile', as long as the classic taste of Milman, the plaintive sweetness of Barry Cornwall, and the frank nature of Knowles, linger, like flowers upon the Muse's grave. But they have almost deserted the public haunt, and England can hardly boast anything that deserves to be called a national stage.

The following scenes were written, as you well know, exclusively for the closet, founded upon facts which occurred at Oxford, and are well detailed and illustrated by an interesting ballad in a little volume of Poems, lately published at Oxford, entitled the *Midland Minstrel*, by Mr Gillet: and may thus be succinctly narrated.

The Manciple of one of the Colleges early in the last century had a very beautiful daughter, who was privately married to a student without the knowledge of the parents on either side.

During the long vacation subsequent to this union the husband was introduced to a young lady, who was at the same time proposed as his bride: absence, the fear of his father's displeasure, the presence of a lovely object, and, most likely, a natural fickleness of disposition overcame any regard he might have cherished for his ill-fated wife, and finally he became deeply enamoured of her unconscious rival. In the contest

of duties and desires, which was the consequence of this passion, the worse part of man prevailed, and he formed and executed a design almost unparalleled in the annals of crime.

His second nuptials were at hand when he returned to Oxford, and to her who was now an obstacle to his happiness. Late at night he prevailed upon his victim to accompany him to a lone spot in the Divinity Walk, and there murdered and buried her. The wretch escaped detection, and the horrid deed remained unknown till he confessed it on his deathbed. The remains of the unfortunate girl were dug up in the place described, and the Divinity Walk was deserted and demolished, as haunted ground. Such are the outlines of a *Minor's Tragedy*.

My age, it will be said, is a bad excuse for the publication of a faulty poem; be it so: secure of your approbation, I can meet with a careless smile the frown of him who reads only to condemn.—I am, my dear sir, yours most sincerely,

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES.

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For thou art weak, and tearful, and dost shiver
Wintrily sad ; and thy life's healthy river,
With which thy body once was overflown,
Is dried and sunken to its banks of bone.
He carved it not ; nor was the chisel's play,
That dashed the earthen hindrances away,
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The winged tool, as digging out a spell,
Followed a magnet wheresoe'er it fell,
That sucked and led it right : and for the rest,
The living form, with which the stone he blest,
Was the loved image stepping from his breast.
And therefore loves he it, and therefore stays
About the she-rock's feet, from hour to hour,
Anchored to her by his own heart the power
Of the isle's Venus therefore thus he prays.
' Goddess, that made me, save thy son, and save
The man, that made thee goddess from the grave.
Thou know'st it not , it is a tearful coop
Dark, cold, and horrible—a blinded loop
In Pluto's madhouse' green and wormy wall.
O save me from't ! Let me not die, like all ;
For I am but like one : not yet, not yet,
At least not yet ; and why ? My eyes are wet
With the thick dregs of immature despair ,
With bitter blood out of my empty heart.
I breathe not aught but my own sighs for air,
And my life's strongest is a dying start.
No sour grief there is to me unwed ,
I could not be more lifeless being dead.
Then let me die. Ha ! did she pity me ?
Oh ! she can never love. Did you not see,
How still she bears the music of my moan !
Her heart ? Ah ! touch it. Fool ! I love the stone.
Inspire her, gods ! oft ye have wasted life
On the deformed, the hideous, and the vile :
Oh ! grant it my sweet rock, my only wife.